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DEEDES BEY

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Wyndham Deedes in Anatolia, 1913

# DEEDES BEY

*A Study of*  
*Sir Wyndham Deedes*  
*1883—1923*

BY  
JOHN PRESLAND

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

MY thanks are due to many people for help in the making of this book. First of all to the mother of Sir Wyndham Deedes for the generosity with which she gave me all his letters which she had preserved, from his earliest years to recent days, letters of the most intimate nature as well as those of more general interest. Unhappily she has not lived to see the completion of the book, but I trust, and I believe, that I have not betrayed her confidence nor made public any letters which she would have felt were for her eyes alone. She entrusted to me also all the records, both of her son and of his forebears, which were in her possession, and without which it would have been impossible to piece together the story here presented. I have also gratefully to acknowledge the help of other members of Sir Wyndham's family, who have taken infinite trouble to search for records other than those in his mother's keeping.

I have corresponded with, and been granted interviews by, many of Sir Wyndham's colleagues of the years covered by this sketch and to each one I am indebted for something: an anecdote which throws light on his character, advice on possible sources of information, an account of some incident in which they were associated with him. Chief among them is Major-General Guy Dawnay, who, in the midst of the grave preoccupations of this war, redeemed a promise made three years earlier to read the chapters dealing with the campaign in Gallipoli, in which he himself played a notable part. I have embodied in my text his valuable annotations, and I wish here to place on record my deep gratitude for his help.



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Though it is not possible to name all those whom I have seen or written to, I cannot pass in silence the names of Lord Hankey, for his kindness in advising me on some matters connected with the Arab Bureau ; of Major-General Aspinall-Oglander, the official Historian of the Gallipoli Campaign ; and of Colonel Meinertzhagen. I have also to thank the Middle East Section of the Foreign Office for their courtesy in reading and commenting on certain passages.

A special word of thanks is also due to Mr. A. Kartal, of the Turkish Section of the B.B.C., for his help in correcting the spelling of Turkish names. Owing to the recent adoption by Turkey of the Latin script, the modern spelling of Turkish words is nearly always different from that employed by Sir Wyndham before 1920, and at his suggestion I submitted to Mr. Kartal a very lengthy list. Even so, the spelling is not quite consistent, for two reasons. First, in the case of names familiar to the British public, such as Trebizond, I have retained the traditional spelling, since to write Trebizun would perhaps appear as pedantic as to write Napoli for Naples. Secondly, in territories formerly Turkish, and now no longer so, such as Cyrenaica and Syria, place-names have not been changed according to the Turkish rule but either retain their old form or, in Cyrenaica, have been italianized. To any reader familiar with that terrain I make my apologies for these inconsistencies.

Lastly, though I have done my best to ascertain the real facts of any event to which Sir Wyndham refers, the interpretations of character, both of his and of the other actors in this story, are my own. Mine, too, are such expressions of opinion as occur. Sir Wyndham has consented to read only a very few passages of this book and in no case would he offer a comment, save on the facts as actually known to him.

## FOREWORD

MY wish to write this record arose from a chance conversation with Wyndham Deedes one summer evening when something — a dog barking in the quiet dusk — tapped in him a vein of reminiscence and he recounted some of the strange events in Tripoli and Asia Minor which arose out of his work as an officer in the Turkish Gendarmerie. I have long felt that much of the interesting stuff of history goes unrecorded ; our eyes are fixed too exclusively on the centre of action and the periphery is unnoticed. In our own century, for example, there is an immense amount of detailed information concerning the political events of the stormy years before the Great War, of the Home Rule Bill, of industrial conflicts, yet records of the suppression of the slave trade in Nigeria, of the policing of the North-West Frontier, of the administration of Cyprus or the Leeward Islands are hard to come by, save in Government publications or in the conversation of the men who had that work to do. Yet it is on such men, on their integrity, their devotion and their intelligence that the structure of the British Empire still in large measure depends ; it is through them that certain ideals which lie at the heart of the British people are “ exported ” and take root in distant places, subtly but profoundly to modify the lives and institutions of alien peoples. When — as must happen some day in the march of history — the British Empire has ceased to exist as a geographical fact, the influence of its dominant characteristics may still pervade races who scarcely remember its history, as the Roman tongue and Roman law still interpenetrate the speech and

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the jurisprudence of this country, and the roads built by Roman engineers still run straight and true from vantage-point to vantage-point across our green island.

It seemed to me, even with the little that I then knew of Deedes' life, that here was a small piece of history worth recording, and when he objected that he had never played any but secondary rôles, I countered that it is not alone those who take the centre of the stage who give the true measure of a nation's growth or decline. The spotlight which illumines the dominant figures dazzles the eye, so that it cannot perceive the abundant detail in the half-light where the acts and thoughts from which they draw their power are amassed and without which they could have no solidity, being but shadows on a curtain.

"How much we know of Rome", I argued, "in the third and fourth centuries, of its magnificence, its luxury, its bitter political conflicts, its literature, its social splendour; none the less, what would we not give for a contemporary record of Roman Britain and of the men who, while Rome was rotting, turbulent and corrupt, guided and governed Britain in the century before the last withdrawal of the Roman legions? What richness of experience might one not draw from an account of the military, economic and human problems which beset those sturdy and conscientious administrators, so far from home and so often unsupported, set down as they arose in all their harassing immediacy, in the diary of the Commandant of Colchester, or of a centurion on the Roman Wall?"

The argument prevailed, though not without difficulty, for Deedes has all the ordinary Englishman's dislike of publicity, feeling perhaps (though he would most strenuously deny the phraseology!) that it is "bad form". And, apart from an inherent modesty which persuades him that no record of his doings could be of special interest, he is of a peculiar reserve, and though he is accessible to all,

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quick in sympathy to all, though his acquaintances range from the humblest in the social scale to the most exalted, from the simplest to the most intellectually gifted, there is, even to his most intimate friends, an inner sanctuary over whose threshold none may venture.

The notion, therefore, that anyone should make a book about him was at first, and still perhaps is, highly unwelcome, but when consent was given it was given ungrudgingly, and all personal and private records, whether diaries, letters or notes, were placed unreservedly in my hands. But as I perused this often incomplete but always illuminating record the tenor of the book which I had set out to write was changed. Not Deedes' share in the picturesque or historic events in which he participated focussed my attention, but the spirit which slowly and at times uncertainly manifested itself through these activities. For in the last instance all action is no more than the medium through which the spirit expresses itself in the temporal world, and the abiding interest of all action is its revelation of the character, the will and the aspirations of him who performs it.

This book in no way pretends to be a complete record of the life of Wyndham Deedes. To attempt such a task at the present moment would be clearly impossible, for he is as yet a man only in middle age with, one may well hope, many years of activity still before him, and it is difficult to predict, with one so little static as he, in what direction they may take him. Nor have I attempted to carry the story up to the time of writing, for his life falls very clearly into two parts : the years up to 1923 during which he was in the Army, served in two wars and held important administrative posts in parts of the world far distant from home, and the years since 1923, when he left the Army, relinquished Government service and set himself, as a private individual, to that work of social reform within

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our own land with which his name is now by most people associated. The record of this work must be for a later time and another writer, but the contrast between his life up to 1923, when he reached his fortieth year, and subsequently, adds interest, and indeed piquancy to both halves of the story, so different are they in their setting and in all external circumstance. In the first half he lived away from these islands, save for short terms at Aldershot and Cork; he served as a youth in the Boer War, was stationed in Bermuda, in Malta — where he met the great ones of the earth — lived in Tripoli, Asia Minor, Constantinople, Cairo, Palestine. As Intelligence Officer he participated in the grandiose tragedy of Gallipoli; was in the inner counsels of that group of men in Cairo through whose efforts the Arab revolt was launched; entered Jerusalem with Allenby on the historic 11th of December; shared in the abortive and melancholy efforts at settlement of the Allied High Commissions in Constantinople. As first Civil Secretary in Palestine he had to deal with the claims and counter-claims of Moslem, Jew and Christian, and to spend himself in the detail of a vast new administration; as acting High Commissioner he had to exercise the authority of Government and wear its dress, take the salute on the King's Birthday, walk down the official red carpet while the guard of honour stood at attention. And in 1923 he turned his back on the Near East, voluntarily relinquished all the trappings of distinction and went to live in the East End of London and to pass his days between Bethnal Green and Bedford Square in the unspectacular, never-ending struggle to bring some light into the dark places of our social organization, some sweetness into the bitter and frustrated lives of the unfortunate.

Even within the limited sphere of the years under review this book can give only a partial account, since many of the actors in the private drama of Deedes' life are

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still alive, and he would never have agreed to the writing of this book save on my formal undertaking that nothing which came to my knowledge from the perusal of private letters and diaries should be published if it could cause personal pain to anyone living. And, further, there are certain intimate matters involving family loyalties and personal affections which a man has a right to keep to himself during his lifetime ; some matters, too, which he has a right to keep to himself for all time, and when a friend has confidently placed in one's hands the private and unedited records of his life, to outrun discretion is a meaner vice than to pick a pocket. With this reservation, however, I have dealt fairly and squarely with the material at my disposal, have not hesitated to publish his criticisms and comments when they have a historical interest, nor to quote his written word on occasions when his own judgment has been at fault, but have attempted to give a true picture of the man himself and his relation to those about him, in conformity with that phrase of Othello's which sums up in brief words the whole duty of a biographer :

Nothing extenuate,  
Nor aught set down in malice.

J. P.

LONDON  
*September 1941*

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## *Chapter One*

IT is difficult, for one not born in England, to understand the English Country Gentleman ; difficult even for an Englishman if he views the subject through the intellectual spectacles of a social doctrine. For the place of the Country Gentleman in the social structure is at once so privileged and so nebulous, his influence so great and yet so tenuous, and he himself so diverse, inconsistent and eccentric in his behaviour and character, that all definitions falsify by applying the straitness of definition to so fluid an entity. For the typical Country Gentleman, highly privileged, is not noble and his seat is in the Commons, beside industrial representatives from the great cities and the spokesmen of labour from Tyneside or South Wales. Rich he may have been, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but his privilege was unimpaired by the modesty of his possessions. His younger sons earned their living in the Army and the Church but, if the family was large, in trade also until the late eighteenth century, and it was no uncommon thing to find boys of such stock as the Oxindens apprenticed to merchants in London. His daughters have married with great titles ; they have also married merchants, and a typical English family might "call cousins" with an Earl and with a mercer in Cheapside. Yet, through all these diversities and contradictions there is an inner factor which is constant, a body of unwritten family tradition linking its members to the most distant degree of cousinship, what-



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ever the material differences of their lives, an attitude of mind which unconsciously but powerfully modifies their relationship to those not of their clan, an acceptance of a privilege which defies analysis because it has no external form, no defined rights or adornments, only a vast and pervasive mutual understanding. Such a community within a community must be the despair of the revolutionary. You can cut off the head of an Earl; you can dispossess a "money Baron"; you can nationalize the land, but not easily or quickly can you destroy that which has no legal entity, no material regalia but only a network of imponderable relationships and a secret idiom, as it were, by which the members know each other and communicate unwritten knowledge. Even today, in spite of the progressive impoverishment of all land-owning families and of the great social changes brought about by the redistribution of the national income, the spread of elementary and adult education, the accelerated urbanization of our island, the Country Gentleman is not extinct, though you may meet him in strange guises: in the uniform of a policeman, the raincoat of a journalist, the respectable dark raiment of industry or the Civil Service. And the "mythos" of the Country Gentleman is still a force to be reckoned with by any who assume the authority of government; it still has power to polarize the instincts and affections of men and to draw a charmed circle into which neither the rich, nor the powerful nor the Dictator himself can find entry. That weightiness of the imponderable in English life, manifest not alone in the privilege of the Country Gentleman but in a whole host of unwritten institutions, understandings and traditions, is perhaps the reason why attempted dictatorship in any form finds itself enmeshed in the cobweb cords of Lilliput which all the strength of the giant Gulliver could not break.

To such a family the subject of this biography belongs.

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In his maturity he has come to distrust all privilege save that which attaches to individual merit, and has set before him as an ideal the evolution of a society which shall be classless. But the historian may well ask whether it is possible for the individual to eliminate from himself a habit of thought which has persisted for centuries and which was the main educational factor of his formative years, which spoke to him from every corner of ancient houses, which met his eye in the familiar landscape which was a family possession, which touched its cap or gave him "Good morning" from the country folk to whom he was not just a little boy like any other, but a member of the family which had owned the land on which their cottages stood and claimed their loyalties for a dozen generations. This is not to deny the sincerity of his belief in the classless society but to suggest that he inevitably approaches it from a different angle than does the reformer who entered the world without privilege, without possessions, without the long tradition. Possessions may perish long before privilege and tradition, for the Deedes family, which had lived and owned land in the south-eastern corner of Kent for four hundred years, is today landless, and yet Wyndham Deedes' elder brother is still "the Squire" to the villages round Hythe and Saltwood, and his brother's son is still "the young Squire", though he lives and works in London.

In reading through the Deedes family papers, of which a large number have happily been preserved by a natural habit of orderliness and thrift, one is tracing through the centuries the history of a typical English county family; a family acquisitive, public-spirited and conservative. They conserved their family papers, they conserved and added to their lands and they conserved, generation after generation, the same standard English names. William, Henry, Thomas and Julius, Sara, Elizabeth and Dorothy occur in the baptismal registers of their numerous progeny through-

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out the centuries ; the first Wyndham Deedes is the present, and one may perhaps indulge the fantasy that the chance that made him the bearer of a name hitherto strange in the annals of the Deedes was a foreshadowing of that touch of strangeness which sets him apart from all his Kentish forebears.

The first authentic Deedes is Thomas of Dover, who was born sometime in the reign of Henry VIII and died in 1603, the year of the accession of James I, having lived through the religious persecutions of Mary's reign and the marvellous spectacle of the Elizabethan era, when the creative energy of the English people, in war, in adventure, in literature, in the field of economics, in the art of building and the zest of living, reached its highest peak. From this Thomas Deedes to the present there is an unbroken record of fifteen generations and in the mass of uncatalogued and haphazard family papers one can follow the fortunes of successive members of the family, trace the rise in their status and worldly possessions as from sheep-farmers they became land-owners on an ever greater scale, increased their holdings by marriage, assumed the dignities of Mayor, Jurat, and Barons of the Cinque Port of Hythe, sat in successive Parliaments and, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, were closely related to those who moved in the circle of royalty and preserved among their family annals correspondence with Castlereagh which reveals some of the solemn and futile intrigues that surrounded royal marriages and divorce.

It was the first Thomas Deedes of Dover whose sheep browsed on the green downs above Shakespeare's Cliff and he used to send his wool-clip, loaded on pack-horses, to the market at Ashford. On the backs of those sheep the edifice of the family's fortunes was raised, for in the sixteenth century the woollen trade was so profitable that much arable land was allowed to go out of cultivation in

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favour of sheep until, in the reign of Elizabeth, England was already importing wheat from the Baltic provinces. Thomas Deedes lived always at Dover and so did his eldest son Julius, who was born in 1565 and died in 1628. Julius acquired yet more land in the neighbourhood and was already a citizen of importance, as well as of substance, for he rode the city's bounds and was given the freedom of the city. In the next generation, however, the family seems to have settled at Hythe, for Thomas the Second, one of Julius' seven sons, was four times Mayor of Hythe, Captain of the Train Band which was raised during the troublous times of the Civil War, and sat in the Long Parliament which was dissolved by Cromwell in the year that Thomas died.

Thenceforward the family history centres round Hythe, but with people in whom tradition is so profound and so living the sentimental tie with the old city was never completely broken. On one occasion I went with Wyndham Deedes to Dover to look through certain family papers in the possession of two of his old aunts, who were living there in retirement, and as we toiled up the steep hill to their house through the banal and unlovely streets of that historic town, he said — rather breathlessly, for he was carrying a heavy suitcase: "I like Dover; I like to come here, for now the story comes full-circle. Here the first Deedes lived and here live the very last of the landed generation." My whole visit to the bleak little house on the steep hillside is flavoured by that remark, and I saw, not alone that house and that city and those two venerable old ladies who had piteously outlived their generation, but in a series of dissolving views the city of the past beneath the great castle on the cliff, and the green slopes rich with sheep, and the vigorous, practical and law-abiding men and women who were the forebears of my friend.

Julius the Second was also Mayor of Hythe and a Baron of the Cinque Port, chosen to be one of the com-

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pany who carried the canopy over James II at his coronation. How little revolution affected the traditions and habits of England can be seen in his choice, a very few years later, to the same office at the coronation of William and Mary, though there is a note to the effect that on this occasion his son William shall be allowed to act in his stead, "in case Mr. Mayor shall happen to be lame of the gout".

This Julius, who died in 1692, seems to have belonged to the category of individuals who recur so frequently among us that we call them "typical Englishmen". He was shrewd, self-opinionated, prolific and no great respecter of authority, since, while still Mayor of Hythe, he formally returned himself for the Parliament elected in 1685. The House of Commons, however, decided that his action was not lawful and ordered a new writ. That he already was a man of wealth is clear, for on his marriage to Anne Bate he bound himself to pay £3000 to her guardians, and there are records of purchases of land at Aldington, Eastbridge, Bitchbarrow and Hythe. More land came to him too by bequest; at Rucking, in Kent, from his mother's brother Henry Wallis, and an estate in Wales from his cousin Julius Deedes, of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. Altogether, there was ample justification for the pious sentence with which he concluded an account of his estate, under the date of February 14th, 1679/80: "for these and all other mercies, both spirituall and temporall, the Lord make me truly thankfull". This echoes the sentiments of another, more famous Englishman, Samuel Pepys, who frequently in his *Diary* gives thanks to his Maker for the growing hoard in the strong-box, and in the utterances of these contemporaries one sees that peculiar blend of thought which reached its apotheosis perhaps a century later, when a man could serve God and Mammon in comfort and without a sense of discrepancy.

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A portrait of this Julius Deedes, in the long curled wig of Charles II's fashion and bearing on his handsome face the same slightly saturnine expression that distinguishes the "Merry Monarch", now hangs in Wyndham Deedes' house in Bethnal Green, above the beautiful staircase which was built when both Julius and Charles II were alive.

From 1693, and from thence for several generations, the Deedes boys went to Corpus Christi, Oxford. At first it was a younger son, with a view to taking orders, but subsequently elder sons went too, and one may note a change in the status of the Universities and in the attitude of the Country Gentleman towards a humanistic education for the heir on whom should devolve the duties of administering the estates and carrying on the family. Earlier generations had considered that, for a young gentleman of fortune, a tutor could inculcate sufficient Latin for him not to disgrace himself in polite society, while a Grand Tour would polish up his manners and give him a bowing acquaintance with the more generally approved works of art in foreign countries. The notion of the Grand Tour persisted long in this tradition-loving family and Wyndham Deedes and his brother were launched on one, as shall be recounted.

William Deedes the Fifth, who lived from 1761 to 1834, acquired Saltwood Castle, near Hythe, where much of Wyndham Deedes' youth was passed and around which so much of his affection still lingers. It had belonged to William the Fifth's father-in-law, Sir Brooke Bridges, who gave it to him in exchange for certain other property, but it was a mediaeval castle, old and ruined, and he never lived in it but began to build, about 1795, a house at Sandling. Sandling Park is a typical gentleman's residence of the period; it is situated in a beautifully wooded park with a view over the rolling green country of Kent, and it is solidly built to withstand the onslaught of the Channel gales,

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but it is cold and sombre and rather forbidding, having neither the rich fantasy of Elizabethan building nor the gracious comfort of the hundred and fifty years after. And it has a basement. Although William Deedes had enough land to spread his household over an acre if he chose, his servants were expected to live underground, and his children — he had nineteen — were huddled with their nurses and governesses into small draughty rooms in the upper stories, though the hall and reception rooms were of a Palladian splendour. It is a representative house alike in its aesthetic, domestic and social aspects, and it reveals the institutions and the ideals of those opening years of the nineteenth century; it was such houses as this that were the background of Jane Austen's novels and it is fitting enough that she once visited Sandling and — the family records say — approved it.

It was in this house that the Deedes lived through the long anxieties of the Napoleonic Wars. It was during the lifetime of William the Fifth that the Hythe military canal — then called Mr. Pitt's canal — was made to facilitate the transport of troops, and that the Martello towers were built all along the South Coast as defence against a French landing. In the cellars of Sandling House the family silver lay packed for many a day, ready for immediate removal if Napoleon should land, and one turbulent night the whole house was in an uproar, the horses taken out of the stables and harnessed, and the children and nurses and ladies-maids and cooks and governesses huddled into their clothes, while bundles of necessary belongings were thrown hastily together, ready for flight, since the beacon on Tolesfoot Hill which was to give notice of a French landing had been lighted — in error, as it transpired afterwards. But William Deedes was Colonel of the East Kent Volunteers, as his ancestor had been Captain of the Train Band in the seventeenth century, and as such he and his sons had to

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fulfil their obligations, undertaken at a meeting in March 1793, when a local volunteer corps of horse was recruited, "for the purpose of bringing Intelligence in cases of Emergency; to be an escort to women and children in conveying them to places of safety in cases of danger; to assist in causing cattle to be driven from the coast in case of Invasion. . . ." Today the descendants of that volunteer corps take their turn at the Air Raid Precaution listening posts, and on marshland and down, in field and coppice, watch for the approach of a yet more dread invader, while Wyndham Deedes, the great-grandson of that William, can be seen in the small hours of the night, after a long and arduous day's work, patrolling the streets of Bethnal Green with gas-mask and tin-hat, as Chief Air Warden. So constant is the pattern of English institutions and the English habit of mind.

It was a cousin of William the Fifth, Sir Brooke Taylor, who was Private Secretary to the Prince Regent and Envoy Extraordinary to the courts of Baden and Bavaria. He was entrusted with the "delicate commission" of negotiating the marriage of the Duke of Kent with the widowed Princess of Leiningen in 1818, and among the crumbling and yellowed papers, tied up in bundles in old newspapers, one may trace the claims and counter-claims of the contracting parties on the questions of dowry, place of residence and the strictly defined privileges of the Princess' two sons by her first marriage. So well did Sir Brooke Taylor steer his course among these cobwebs that he received an invitation from the Prince Regent to be present at the wedding of this couple, who in due course became the parents of Queen Victoria. Among the other curiosities of this correspondence there is a *procès-verbal*, sent to Castlereagh in July 1822, attesting to the presence at the confinement of the Duchess of Cambridge, in Hanover, of Brooke Taylor and two other gentlemen, when at "eight o'clock of the



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morning of the same day, her Royal Highness was safely delivered of a Female Child whose sex was determined by actual inspection" ! And there is a bundle of letters relating to the matrimonial disputes of the Prince Regent and his wife and of the delicate situations which arose in the little German courts when, in the course of her escapades, she proposed to visit one of them, though under the shadow of her husband's displeasure and accompanied by people who were certainly *non persona grata* to the anxious princelings who were her hosts. According to the Deedes family tradition there was, besides the papers preserved, a further packet of correspondence giving intimate and scandalous details of this marital quarrel, but early in this century they were shown to "certain personages" and destroyed by request.

While Sir Brooke Taylor roamed Europe, from Hanover to Rome, the Deedes stayed at home. But they had their bow to royalty, although it is not likely, if they were the solid and self-sufficing family they had always been, that they were greatly impressed. When the Allied Sovereigns visited England in 1814, while Napoleon was a prisoner on Elba, the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Russia passed through Hythe. The Emperor, accompanied by the Duchess of Oldenburg, "alighted at the Swan" and were received by the Mayor "and a number of Ladies and Gentlemen of the town and neighbourhood. They remained about an hour, during which time they took refreshments of tea, coffee, etc. Mrs. Nicholay did the honours of the tables, assisted by the fair and accomplished daughter of William Deedes Esquire."

The sixth William Deedes was the grandfather of Wyndham. He lived from 1796 to 1862 and had twelve children, of whom four died in infancy. Of the six daughters and two sons who survived, the women had an amazing longevity — the youngest of the daughters is

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still alive — but neither of the sons lived beyond early middle age. This William's life was passed in the placidity of the years which followed the breaking of the Napoleonic power, while the struggles and sufferings of the Industrial Revolution, the Luddite riots and Peterloo came only as echoes to this quiet agricultural country. He was for many years Member for East Kent and therefore saw the passing of the Reform Bill, and he was Deputy-Lieutenant of the County and Commandant of the East Kent Yeomanry as well as Chairman of the Kent General Sessions. Wyndham Deedes as a little boy used to talk with an old woman on their estate who remembered his grandfather and would tell how, riding from Sandling Park to Hythe to attend the Sessions, he would stop at her cottage, take off his periwig and leave it with her while he went to shoot woodcock, then having bagged his bird, resume his pigtail and go on to take his seat, where — as Deedes says — he would sentence a poacher to transportation or hang a man for sheep-stealing. But this William, still invested with such feudal powers, was modern enough to be a cricketer and was President of the M.C.C. in 1831. In that list of his activities one has an epitome of the life of the Country Gentleman in the first half of the nineteenth century, prosperous, freely-breeding and authoritative, dominating the small community of humbler folk among whom he lived by virtue of his privilege, but with a strong sense of public duty as he understood it. His prowess as a cricketer is a pointer to the status that games were beginning to take in the social life of England; cricket was an acceptable amusement for a gentleman, and the top-hats and white duck trousers in which it was played could be recognized as gentlemanly habiliments. Perhaps the advent of the cricket cap was the first step in the democratization of sport!

In the next generation there was a very great change. William the Sixth had been a home-keeping man, like all

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his forebears, but both his sons went into the Army and served overseas. The elder, William, fought in the Crimea and throughout the Indian Mutiny; the younger, Herbert, also served through the Mutiny and was at the battles of Hindum and Badlikeserai and at the storming of Delhi. William the Sixth had twelve children and his father had nineteen, but William the Seventh died childless in 1887 at the age of fifty-three and the property went to his brother. Herbert married in 1870, but for ten years there was no child of the marriage and then four were born: Herbert William, in 1881; Wyndham Henry, in 1883; Dorothy Mary, in 1885; and Marjorie, in 1890. Herbert Deedes died in 1891 at the age of fifty-five. Of this generation one daughter, Marjorie, had no children, Wyndham has not married and William has one son only — William the Ninth — and three daughters. The family fortunes have shrunk with their fertility. When the father of Wyndham Deedes died, Sandling Park was already let and his brother's widow lived at the Gate House of Saltwood Castle, which his brother had restored and repaired in 1883, but some of the land had already been sold and the rest was heavily mortgaged. And Wyndham Deedes and his brother and sisters were born in and passed their childhood in London, since their father held a position at the War Office as Private Secretary to Gathorne-Hardy (afterwards Lord Cranbrook) and later as Permanent Under-Secretary for War. Today the Deedes own no land. Not a rood of all the property over which their grandfather rode and walked, shot and hunted remains in their possession; Sandling House and Saltwood Castle have alike passed into other hands, and Postling House, where an earlier generation lived before William the Fifth built Sandling, and the Dower House, where his many unmarried granddaughters still held their simple state as county ladies, and the little Home Farm itself where the children of Herbert Deedes

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came from London to spend their holidays, all now house the possessions and echo to the voices of those who are not Deedes. Only their tradition remains in that countryside, and, as the old folk find their way one by one to the green churchyards, that too must become more and more tenuous till at last there is nothing but a ghost to join the company of all the other ghosts that throng our ancient land.

Here, in the history of the Deedes family, is the England of four centuries in microcosm. Their fortunes rose with the rise of the middle classes as the gold of the New World poured into the Old. Though Thomas Deedes of Dover may have had no "venture" in those voyages to the Spanish main which carried some of Queen Elizabeth's own fortune, the price of the wool-clip he sent to Ashford rose with the increased demand for what money could buy, and was carried in ships which in ever greater numbers sailed from English ports to be exchanged for silk and spices, ivory and wine and all the desirable commodities of far-away lands. But however wealth came to the Deedes, it went back into the land, and for centuries the land stood them in good stead, repaying their husbandry, repaying too their loyalty, for they did not dissipate their rents in cities but lived on and by the land, finding there a mode of life rich and suave and satisfying. Rooted in that supremely English corner of England, South-Eastern Kent, they are woven closely into the texture of our history. They paid their tax to repel the Spanish Armada; they helped to raise the Train Bands in the Civil Wars and the volunteers of the Napoleonic era; for generations they took their part in national and local government. Like most of their class, they were King's men in the Civil Wars, and though they were not ruined, as were many loyal gentlemen, they sold their silver plate to help the cause. There is still a piece of pewter in the house in Bethnal Green (one of a large number

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of pieces now dispersed) stamped with their name and arms and the date, a custom permitted to the Cavaliers to record their sacrifice. They were conservatives in grain; the Crown and the Church had from them a loyalty so strong as to be largely implicit, and from the Great Rebellion to the middle of Queen Victoria's reign they prospered behind those bulwarks.

But other forces were knocking at the gate of English history. The rise of industrialism and the tilting of the balance between town and country in favour of the former; the repeal of the corn laws in 1846 and the importation of cheap American wheat, successive land-taxes from the time of Pitt to that of Lloyd George, and the death duties which, imposed in 1894 with a maximum of 8 per cent on the largest fortunes, have been used as an ever more formidable weapon against inherited wealth: all these changed the direction of the current of the Deedes lives. Less revenue from the agricultural produce and higher taxes depleted the fortune that three and a half centuries had amassed. And the large families of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries became a heavy burden in the later nineteenth; there had to be dowries for marrying daughters, provision for unmarried ones, younger sons had to be launched and maintained and the shrinking fortune was further diminished. The decay was slow but unrelenting. First the big house was let, then land was mortgaged, then property was sold, and the generation of Wyndham Deedes saw the end of an era. The law of change is the one sure rule of history, and to deplore too greatly the passing of the old and the coming of the new is to misunderstand the dynamism of national life. But when the old order, imperfect as are all human institutions, has been so gracious, so seemly, so fruitful of honourable men and dignified women, it is permitted to give the tribute of regret as one writes on its headstone: *Hic Jacet.*

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This then is the background of Wyndham Deedes. Only in the light of this tradition can he be fully understood, for he was bred in it and it entered into the very fabric of his character: though the era itself had ended, the sunset glories still lingered round his youth. Those who know him now, who experience in their daily contacts with him the passionate denial of wealth and privilege, who look to him as one of the leaders in the new order when a man's sole merit, not his inheritance, shall dictate his place in society, will have a truer sense of the depth of that conviction when they realize that his boyhood and young manhood were dominated by the family tradition and the ambition to see its fallen fortunes restored, not for himself, a younger son, but for his elder brother and all that he represented as head of an ancient family. He has travelled far from the ideals and enthusiasms of his youth, as he has travelled to far places of the world from that quiet corner of England. But still he loves that green countryside, where the primrose-filled valleys lie below the smooth grassy sweep of the downs and the rich inland pastures give place to the wind-swept beauty of the marshes, empty save for the grazing sheep between the reed-filled dykes and the squat towers of the little marshland churches. All that was once in the ownership of his forebears; it is still his heart's home, and one may at rare moments surprise in him a passion of home-sickness more potent to stir him than any human tie. But it is those most deeply rooted who adventure furthest; the tempests of change, whether in the world or their own souls, cannot destroy their equilibrium, and the poise which he maintains in the farthest excursions of knight-errantry and the leadership of the most forlorn hopes is his heritage from the sober and home-loving generations who were born and lived and died in that familiar and beloved countryside.

## *Chapter Two*

WYNDHAM DEEDES must have been a charming little boy. There is a photograph of him at the age of twelve, seated on a pony, which shows a slight, rather frail-looking body and a delicate face wearing an expression of serious innocence. He looks the sort of little boy, gentle-mannered and affectionate, who would be much loved by his mother and aunts, as indeed he was, and approved of by all kind and benevolent ladies. He does not appear well equipped for the rough-and-tumble of life, and then, as now, his looks belied the amazing toughness of spirit and body which are his. The serious countenance is also characteristic; there is no extant portrait of him smiling, and the youthful gravity has deepened to an expression of settled melancholy with the passing years. Already, at that early age, the responsibilities of life weighed on his shoulders; his father died when he was eight and his brother inherited the property, a property heavily mortgaged and further encumbered by the necessity of maintaining a number of his father's sisters. His mother, being a woman of great energy and remarkable intelligence, took over the management of the estate, having studied the business of estate-management with characteristic thoroughness, and thereby saved a thousand pounds a year in agents' salaries. Even so, money was a great preoccupation throughout all these early years and the family had to live very simply, as simplicity was understood by that class and age. There



W. D. at Saltwood Castle





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were few luxuries and little was spent on dress or amusement, but the boys went to Eton and the girls to the approved finishing schools in England or France, and if the food was simple it was of excellent quality: Mrs. Deedes would never have admitted to her kitchen anything but prime chickens and best butter.

Mrs. Deedes had set herself the formidable task of handing over to her elder son, when he attained his majority, an unencumbered estate such as his grandfather had enjoyed, and how far Wyndham identified himself with her object can be seen from many passages in his early letters, beginning even when he was at school. "In your last letter", he writes to her in 1902, when he was nineteen, "you thank me for not incurring more expenses. . . . It's no temptation to me to incur unnecessary expenses. Why, what greater wish have I than to live cheaply knowing that what I do not spend goes to the estate, the estate which I always hope will be the one connecting link of the family, into which all its members will pool every available penny. . . . We must not work for ourselves, we must not make money (none of us is likely to!) for ourselves; we must throw it into the common pool. . . ."

In that little note one can already discern many of the characteristics which distinguish him now: a need to put the claims of the community before his individual rights, though at that age the community was the family and it is now mankind, a practice of unselfishness so deep in grain as to be second nature, and a most disarming ingenuousness. He is still ingenuous about money matters and though fifty-eight years' residence in the world have made him accept the standard of ordinary individuals in such matters, he does not, in his heart of hearts, understand it and would find nothing remarkable if one of his friends should hand over all his possessions to some person or cause.

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The biographical gleanings from the family papers about young Wyndham are rather meagre, perhaps because he was only a second son and the strong dynastic traditions of the family, and above all of his mother, concentrated attention on his elder brother, the heir and the hope of the house. At the age of six he figured with his brother and sister in a performance of *Tableaux Vivants* at Saltwood, garbed in a toga as a little slave in a slave-market, and at the age of eight in a French play at a school Christmas party; both of which occasions he must have hated, as he is very shy and detests all public appearances, and even now, when he has made a speech or led a deputation, will eliminate himself from the company, once the business is over, with a suddenness reminiscent of Shelley.

At nine he went to Evelyn's House at Eton; perhaps his mother sent him to boarding school at that early age because the atmosphere of home was a peculiarly feminine one with a mother, two sisters, a posse of unmarried aunts and his uncle's widow. Of his eight years at Eton we know little: he won a prize or two, played the 'cello at a school concert, was most undistinguished at cricket — his two recorded scores of one and sixteen runs would have distressed Grandfather William, President of the M.C.C.— and made a speech. Since Deedes is now one of the most eloquent and distinguished of speakers, this first performance is worth recalling. "Mr. President and Gentlemen," it ran, "I wish to thank you for having elected me a member of this society. I hope you will never have cause to regret it and that I shall prove myself a worthy member." For a boy who had already expressed the ambition to be a great statesman one day, "like poor Mr. Gladstone", this first effort in oratory is modest enough.

His personal reactions to Eton are also largely a matter of conjecture. Even his most youthful letters show a very English reticence on the subject of his feelings and he

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never says if he is home-sick, whether he hates the hurly-burly of herd life or makes any particular friends or enemies. Knowing the reserve, the delicacy and the imperious need for solitude of the grown man, one may imagine that he detested Eton ; he certainly speaks of it now with distaste and says that he left it after eight years " absolutely uneducated ". The standards and traditions of an English public school at the close of the nineteenth century are now so utterly alien to him that it is possible his view of the past is coloured by his present convictions, but once when asked if he was glad of the chance to go out to the Boer War, he answered : " Well, anything was better than Eton," so it is a fair assumption that the experience of school life, with its lack of privacy, its youthful brutality and coarseness, was as painful to him as it was to the young Shelley. But there was this difference : Shelley rebelled and he did not. Though in his maturity Deedes has set himself against all the most cherished traditions and beliefs of his class and age, he has never been a rebel. He has accepted all authority, worn the yoke of all conventions in his life, he has assimilated them and dominated them and has thereby achieved a spiritual and intellectual freedom greater than that won by a rebel who, spending himself in conflict, enslaves his energies to that against which he rebels.

He left Eton when he was seventeen to go out to the South African War. He had been destined for the Army ever since he could remember ; his father had been a distinguished soldier and, during the Indian Mutiny, after being wounded, had become A.D.C. to Sir Archdale Wilson during the siege and capture of Lucknow. Later he was A.D.C. to his uncle, General Brooke Taylor, and from 1873, when he returned to England, until his death in 1891, he had worked at the War Office in close association with General John French, Lord Cranbrook and Colonel

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the Honourable F. Stanley, afterwards Lord Derby. Wyndham Deedes' mother came of a long line of eminent soldiers. She was Rose Elinor Barrow, daughter of Major-General Barrow who was Commissioner of Oudh when she and Herbert Deedes married, and the Army tradition was in the grain of her character. It was a passion with her, second only to her powerful dynastic sense, and as she was prepared to dedicate herself, her energies, her comfort and her family to the rehabilitation of her elder son's property, so it seemed to her unquestionable that her younger son should carry on the military tradition of his father, his grandfather and his great-uncle.

Though the financial situation of the Deedes family might have suggested in mere prudence that Wyndham should enter one of the more lucrative professions, the idea never for a moment seems to have crossed anybody's mind. It is difficult, looking back over half a century, to realize the depth of the social distinctions which still divided class from class in his youth, but even medicine and the law were looked upon as demeaning occupations for a member of a county family, and though a famous K.C. might be admitted to one's table, the solicitor, like the doctor, entered a Country Gentleman's house by the back door. Deedes actually remembers the solicitor who came to Saltwood on estate business ringing the bell at the Tradesmen's Entrance and being ushered into the gun-room. With such a tradition still dominant in the family no occupation was open to a younger son save the Army and the Church, unless he could afford to enter the Diplomatic Service, and as Deedes says himself, in a letter written when he was twenty-three, "my education had been such as to fit me for the Army only and so I went into it. . . ."

He went gleefully enough at seventeen ; he was caught up on the wave of noisy patriotism which swept England in the last years of the great Victorian reign, though now, older

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and wiser from many a searching trial, the participants look back on it with a wry smile. Young Deedes "mafficked" with the rest of the world in May 1900, and in a rough-and-tumble in the streets of Windsor between Eton v. The Rest "got a swipe over the eye from a soldier's cane", though his hat-brim saved him from serious damage.

In February 1901, just before his eighteenth birthday, he received his commission in the 9th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifles, and for twenty-two years, through varied and often strange experiences, he remained an officer in H.M. forces.

He embarked for South Africa in May 1901, and with that date begins the written record on which this account of his life is based and which continues, with certain very important lacunae, for the next twenty years. In a long series of letters to his mother, in diary-letters written to be handed round the family circle, in notes and jottings, kept often in shorthand for himself alone, and in two long diaries covering many months of the Great War with day-to-day entries, one may follow his adventures, watch his growth from adolescence to manhood, from manhood to maturity, see him rising from obscurity to fame and penetrating into those circles where history is made, and then, at the moment when the worldly future seems most brilliant and the highest offices in the State open to him, see him step back and gently but irrevocably close the door. Of the process by which the ambitions of youth gave place to that renunciation he does not write; the diaries deal with events, the letters are not analytical; written as they are to his closest intimates, they give hardly a glimpse of his intimate thoughts and feelings. It is as if there were two Wyndham Deedes: one which he gives to the world about him, to its interests and preoccupations, and to his family and friends; one which he keeps to himself, a shut book, a closed room. None the less, to the thoughtful eye there is revelation in

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these written records. Scattered up and down this mass of documents there are chance phrases, a half-uttered wish, the comment on a book, an exclamation of impatience or a sigh of weariness or of pity which indicate the track along which his spirit travelled, slowly freeing itself from the bonds of convention, from the accepted standards and judgments of the world, to stand unshackled for the vital choice.

When he landed in South Africa the mainspring of the Boer resistance was broken. Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberley had all been relieved, Cronje had surrendered at Paardeberg; Kruger had fled from Pretoria to Water-val Boven. Nevertheless, fifteen months were still to elapse before peace was signed, for the Boers came into their own in guerilla warfare and the pursuit and capture of the numerous commandos taxed the resources of the British and demanded of them that they learn a new technique, with at least a measure of the mobility and flexibility that distinguished the Boers.

Deedes' experience of the war falls into two parts. In the first part he had what most young men would consider the fun of it, saw actual fighting and was always on the move, chasing the mobile commandos across the vast expanses of the South African country; in the second part he had the monotony of life in a remote blockhouse with two or three officers and a handful of men for sole company. Both were testing experiences for a boy straight from school and from the shelter of a home pervaded by a feminine atmosphere, and the interest of these letters attaches, not to the events which they record but to his youthful reactions and the manner in which he adjusted himself to his first contacts with the world of men.

His initial experience was the not uncommon one of trying to find out anyone who wanted him or knew what to do with him; having reported to Captain X, he was

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sent by him to Major Y, and from him to Major Z, and back again to Captain X, and he found himself with nothing to do but go round a few blockhouses. At last, getting sick of standing about watching soldiers dig trenches, he took off his tunic and joined in the digging, which was perhaps his very first venture into unorthodoxy, since an officer was an officer in those days and expected to lead his men, not dig with them. In July, however, he was invited by his mother's old friend, General French, to be his galloper — or A.D.C. — and though at first it seemed that the change only meant the same boredom with the addition of red tabs, he was shortly appointed galloper to Colonel Scobell, who, with a flying column, was set to chasing Boer commandos. During the next weeks he covered many hundred miles, in and out of Cape Colony and the Transvaal, till finally Lothar's commando was caught at Graaf Reinets on September 8th and, after what the *Daily Graphic* called "a stubborn fight", surrendered. It was a small affair enough by later standards for the whole commando numbered no more than 150 men, but it gave him a taste of being under fire, and though in a letter to his mother he contents himself with . . . "all's well that ends well . . .", in one to his uncle, Canon Brooke Taylor, he gives an explicit account of the hardships and dangers, as one man may write to another more than is fitting for the nerves of women-folk.

"Dear Sir," he begins, "I promised you I would write some time and so I have — and I think after our big success in the capture of Commandant Lothar is a befitting occasion.

"Before this 'coup' we had been having an awful hard time of it. Simply going straight across country, whether it was a mountain or a bog it made no odds. The 5 nights before the capture we rose twice at 11.30, once at 12, once 4, and once, the night we took 'em, at 1.0. We had the greatest possible luck the whole time.



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“ . . . The Wednesday then we climbed over the mountains in *pelting* rain, not a dry stitch on us as we had lain out in rain all night and did what little dressing one does in pouring rain and pitch darkness at 4 A.M. After climbing all Wednesday we got into a farm at the bottom of the mountain up which we were to climb the next day. Luckily there was a dense fog which concealed all our movements and enabled us to have fires. Personally we did ourselves well being in an empty farmhouse. Bed at 8. Rose in pitch dark and pouring rain again at 1. Thursday morning, and climbed on hands and knees up a Kloof until 6 — Then when the whole column was up — with the C.M.R. [Cape Mounted Rifles] in centre and IX Lancers on flanks we galloped the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile to make the surprise completer. All this time mind you we had no idea if they were there or not. On reaching the top ‘A’ overlooking the laager we saw some Boers disappearing a few hundred yards away and they *got* it, 2 or 300 rifles firing at once and we in the middle of it an awful row. Well the long and short of it was after 1 hour’s fighting we bagged 123 prisoners, 43 wounded and in addition 13 killed. We lost 10 killed, 12 wounded, one of which was an officer standing by my side at the time — passed through his cigarette case — saved his life — interesting? You never *saw* such an awful mess as the Kraal was in. Dead and wounded and blood and horses all mixed up in a pancake. They had defended themselves, 12 or so in this Kraal, which they told us with us shooting off the ridge 5 yds off was fair —. The iron roof of their laager was riddled through and through. They had shot five men of the IX Lancers in succession just outside the Kraal. Here was a man dying, there a Boer kicking like fun hit through the leg (he died) — There (the worst of them all) a live man with one side of his face and one eye gone. They had bayoneted him while shooting at one of our officers. We

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[Staff] ourselves came under a very heavy fire from that spruit. You never heard such a noise as the bullets made."

At eighteen he had learned that war was a messy business; that it was a cruel business he was to learn also, since Commandant Lothar, being a native of Cape Colony, not of the Transvaal, was held to be a rebel and was shot. Deedes went to see him in gaol and had a long talk with him, afterwards sending him papers and magazines. He says of him, "he is not at all a bad man but I am afraid he will be hung [*sic*] as he is a rebel". One wonders what poor Lothar thought of the fair little officer, looking even younger than his eighteen years, who came and talked to him and sent him magazines.

There were other "executions" also which the boy had to witness. In that bitter guerilla warfare there was ample opportunity for spying and ambush and many small parties of British soldiers were misled and entrapped, so that an order was issued that every Boer found in British uniform should be shot. Colonel Reitz, in his book *Commando*, says that many of the Boers wore khaki taken off the dead because, after two years of continuous marching and fighting, their own clothes were in rags and they could get no others; but it was a harsh business, if dictated by necessity. Deedes has told me that he remembers one drum-head court-martial at which he was present as vividly as if it were yesterday instead of forty years ago. "I can see every detail of the scene," he said. "I was sitting on a little hillock with Scobell and the rest of the Staff and the prisoner was sitting on a chair, with a thorn-bush behind him. They shot him there, on the chair. It was a most beautiful day."

From the action at Graaf Reinet until November 1901, Deedes was still engaged in what he calls, with a schoolboy pun, wild-Boer hunting. Among the wild Boers he hunted was a certain J. C. Smuts, and it is one of the major irration-

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alities of war that here were Smuts and young Deedes, pursued and pursuing, committed to shooting each other at sight, when nature had designed them to understand each other far better than either would have been understood by most of the comrades with whom they fought. Alike in their intellectual vision, their philosophic depth, and their courageous and unswerving devotion to certain ideals, they were fitted to be collaborators in the architecture of the future, yet forty years ago they were arbitrarily enemies. Happily, they never met then and Smuts carried off the honours of the contest with his five hundred weary, hunted and indomitable Boers.<sup>1</sup>

In November, Deedes was ordered to rejoin his regiment at Springs, in the Transvaal, and the active life which he loves gave place to the monotony of blockhouse duty. Colonel Scobell was sorry to lose him and in a letter of farewell he wrote there is more than the kindliness of a commanding officer, an expression of genuine affection which is almost paternal. "Goodbye, my boy," he wrote, "and the best of good luck go with you. If ever I have the power (which isn't likely) to be of any use to you, you may be sure I will use it to do all I can for you, as a more level-headed, sensible youngster I have seldom met, and if you go on as you have begun and stick to it, you will make your mark I feel sure."

Scobell had also had the kindly thought of writing to Mrs. Deedes in September, just after the capture of Lothar's commando.

"My name", he wrote, "may not be quite unfamiliar to you as I dare say your boy has by now told you that he is acting as my A.D.C. General French asked me to take him and of course I said 'Yes', though I don't mind

<sup>1</sup> Deedes met Smuts and talked with him in South Africa at the time of the Munich crisis, 1938, so that one may say that history neatly rounded the circle of their relationship.

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telling you now, that at the time I thought it rather a bore to have so young a boy and so inexperienced to look after. That however was before I knew him, and I am writing now because I want to tell you what a help he is to me and how loath I shall be to part with him. He is young in years, but he has got a very old head on his young shoulders. I don't think I ever met a boy with as much sense, quickness and ability as your son has. He is so charming in himself too and everybody likes him. . . . We have done a good deal of very hard trying work since he has been with me, marching through the mountains without our wagons and comforts, etc., and he has stood it all like a veteran and is as well as can be at this moment. He enjoys it all so much and is particularly pleased when there are bullets knocking about. I do my best to keep him out of the way of these though, much to his disgust, but I won't let him get hurt if I can help it."

Blockhouse duty, after the months with Scobell, was indeed an anti-climax, but after one comment to his mother on the "beastly place", Deedes settled down to it without grouching. He was stationed at Badfontein, on the river Crocodile, near Machadodorp in the Transvaal, and there he remained for nearly fourteen months. The party consisted of three officers besides himself and a handful of men, very much isolated, for the mail only came when a convoy passed their way. There was little to do and not often a sufficient threat of danger to make their night patrols seem worth while. In these circumstances they had necessarily to organize their own occupations; they made a cricket-pitch, laid out a small golf-course and walked the country round for snipe or partridge. Deedes took his education in hand. If he left Eton "knowing absolutely nothing", as he has so often declared, he has done his best to remedy the defect by long hours of study: under the corrugated-iron roof of the farm in the Transvaal; in his

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quarters in Cork ; in Bermuda ; in Malta ; on the arid coast of African Tripoli or in the bug-infested Khans of Anatolia ; in ships, in trains, in the springless cart in which he travelled from Samsun to Sivas and in the peace of his own room today, in the little oasis of quiet which he inhabits amid the clamours of Bethnal Green.

During the monotonous months at Badfontein he read the *History of the Dutch Republic*, Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*, Hallam's *Student's History of England* and *The Transvaal from Within* by Percy Fitzpatrick, in addition to all the political speeches he could get sent from England, and *The Times* and *Spectator*. He solemnly records a good resolution to read no more trash, but to confine his novel-reading to "Kingsley, Dickens, Thackeray and W. Scott"—works of standard fiction, in short, from the school library or such as are recommended by serious-minded relatives. It is improbable that he enjoyed them. His is not the type of mind to which imaginative literature often appeals ; he once said that ideas have always meant more to him than human beings, and ideas have in a manner always been more alive to him than human beings. He provokes a smile also when he recounts naïvely that he "is doing Browning with Salmon" (another officer), and calls up a picture of a slight sun-burned boy very earnestly applying his mind to poetry as if it were algebra, as he sat in the scorched and wind-swept shack that was their mess-room, isolated in the harsh country of the Transvaal. There is something humorous and yet endearing in this earnest cultivation of the mind, particularly when he adventures on poetry which is a strange land to him, but in the intellectual curiosity and the ferocious concentration of these endeavours one sees the beginnings of the man we now know.

The letters of this period are a strange mixture of naïveté and of a maturity of judgment beyond his years.

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If Deedes looked younger than his age — there is a portrait of him with Scobell's staff in which he might be fifteen rather than eighteen — many of his letters home also are those of a schoolboy, even to the stumbling phraseology and the spelling mistakes, and of a boy who retained an innocent freshness, for all the youthful coarseness of Eton and the uncensored conversations of a mess. Home is still the centre of his affections and his point of reference, as it were, and he had a childish home-sickness on his first Christmas Day away from it, when he pictured his mother and sisters "all in bran-new clothes" going to church and eating their turkey and plum pudding without him. Yet at the same time he was capable, not only of prolonged physical endurance and indifference to danger (on which Scobell comments) but of the much rarer quality of acting according to his own judgment where certain principles were involved, without reference to others. One such action was to eschew all alcohol, and though this does not seem a weighty matter in itself it must be seen in relation to the accepted standards of that hard-drinking age and clime. His object, apart from a natural bent towards personal asceticism, was to economize his mess bills, since every penny he could save was a contribution towards the prosperity of his brother's estate, and all his early letters are dotted with references to economy and with anxious heart-searchings on items of his own expenditure. A letter to his mother, dated January 1902, is a particularly good example of the "very old head on his young shoulders" of which Scobell speaks. He is commenting on the carelessness of both officers and men on blockhouse duty and had apparently just written some good advice to his brother (also serving in South Africa) on keeping the men up to scratch: ". . . They are so absolutely careless", he writes, "and always think the Boers are miles away and go to sleep on sentry-go. Fancy, I actually found one of our

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sentries so the other night. The punishment for this you know on active service is to be shot. As it was I said nothing about it but shall not do so again. That shows how little they realize the importance of the thing, namely that they are responsible for the life of every man in the garrison when they are on sentry-go. . . . This however largely depends on their officers who should constantly be visiting them and drumming it into them. Half the cases of disasters and 'regrettable incidents' in this war are from carelessness. . . ."

He himself had a great sense of responsibility for the welfare of his men, constantly visited them, even those in the most outlying posts, though he had to go on foot, having no pony, and soon knew most of them by name, with their family histories and humble anxieties and pre-occupations. He asked his mother to supply him with books for them and was careful about their comfort and their clothing, ". . . I hate the idea of their going about in rags" . . . and played cricket with them, though he never liked the game.

All these traits might well go to the making of a first-class regimental officer, but already at nineteen Deedes' ambitions moved in other directions and, apart from "doing Browning with Salmon", learning Dutch and signalling, he studied Parliamentary reports closely and read with avidity treatises on agriculture and other social problems. There is a series of letters to his mother in which he discusses the probable cost of entering Parliament and he closes it by saying :

"Do not think I have Parliamentary designs. I can't afford it. I asked chiefly from curiosity. . . . Of course, my one wish is that B.<sup>1</sup> should one day do this. He should do this, partly because he is adapted to and has talent for it, secondly, on account of family tradition. . . . Now, I feel

<sup>1</sup> His brother, also called "Bunnie" in these early letters.

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personally I should like to but of course not if I thought by mentioning it to him I should in any way deter him from doing so. . . . What is mine is Bunnie's in his capacity as owner of the estate. . . . I hope any spare money I ever have, to put by for rainy days for him."

He had loyally accepted the position of younger brother to the reigning sovereign and he had entered the profession designed for him, but how little joy he had in it appears in the same letter when he writes, with a youthful impatience and a touch of melancholy: "Do you think the height of my ambition in its natural course is what Bunnie refers to when he says, 'I hope one day to see you get command of a battalion, then leave the Army, marry and settle down'. How intensely common. Why, people are doing that every day all round you. Anybody by hard work and without superhuman accomplishments can get *that* far. I want something better . . . after twenty years of steady regimental work I may get command of a battalion. It's not brilliant, is it?"



## *Chapter Three*

DEEDS was just under twenty when he left Cape Town on February 26th, 1903, and sailed for England.

The next seven years are more conventional and more bare of incident than any other period of his life. His existence was that of a young man of good family and small income serving in the Army in peace-time, stationed in Cork, the Bermudas, Aldershot or Malta, but everywhere and at all times enclosed in the same circle of tradition and occupation. In Ireland he hunted — and enjoyed it hugely — played golf in the Bermudas and Malta, shot when he got the chance, was press-ganged, though unwillingly, to make a fourth at bridge with his Commanding Officer, duly took part in manœuvres and attended the regimental sports, drilled his men, did as he was told and kept his head in all senses when the younger officers grew hilarious at regimental dinners.

Today, he rises at five-thirty ; has dealt with his personal correspondence — an average of twenty or thirty letters daily — before breakfast ; interviews people at his office at half-hourly intervals throughout the greater part of the day ; lunches (if at all) on coffee and a biscuit ; copes with a vast official correspondence ; and on most evenings in the week is either making a public speech, presiding at a conference, taking the chair at one of the numerous committees that look to his guidance, or surrendering one of his rare hours of leisure to listen to the griefs of someone

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who seeks his help and cannot be seen in the crowded office hours. He rarely takes a holiday, and then grudgingly, unless he can use it to visit some district where is in progress one of those social experiments through which he is seeking a new England, an England of greater freedom and opportunity for all than that into which he was born and to which, he acknowledges, he owes so much.

How did the man he now is live as the youth he then was, under that strictest of all our caste systems, in that region whose intellectual frontiers are necessarily so confined, since the nature of Army life isolates men from normal political, social and intellectual contacts? Very uneasily, it is true. But he did live it and lived it with a considerable measure of success, doing all that was required of him with that ability to accept every kind of discipline which is a central trait of his character. He himself is apt to feel that these were wasted years, that had he left the Army earlier his contribution to the life of his generation might have been different and more valuable. It is difficult to strike the balance of profit and loss; certainly his powers might have been earlier released, but the slow banking of the fires under the pressure of that uncongenial existence has its value and the dynamic quality of his later work may owe much to the fact that for so many years the spring was tightly coiled.

The interest of the letters of these seven years, therefore, is almost wholly in the indications they give of an interior growth. A biographer has to follow the clues like the reader of a detective novel, since they are scattered up and down the prolific correspondence Deedes has always maintained with his mother, hidden away among detailed accounts of successful or unsuccessful runs, discussions of the family finances, arrangements and rearrangements about leave, references to friends and relatives and all the paraphernalia of a busy and commonplace existence. Out of

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the small change of daily gossip one must pick the one or two heavier coins that go to make up the sum of the man.

In many respects he grew up very slowly. These letters still retain a schoolboyish quality, above all in everything that pertains to his relation to his mother, for he accepts her admonitions and criticisms almost as a child might and shows none of that adolescent irritability which is a sign of the breaking away of the youth from the out-grown authority of home. The tie between him and his mother was very strong; he loved her deeply, and any hint that he has caused her pain brings him to heel in conformity to her wishes. His consciousness that, since the death of his father, she had carried alone the burden of a family heavily saddled with debt, that all the cares and responsibilities of their education and settlement in life, under the shadow of a financial straitness self-imposed by her determination to free the estate, had devolved on her, reinforced his affection with a sense of obligation and made it impossible for him to oppose her wishes.

She was quite unaware of the dangers inherent in such a situation. She appears, from the family correspondence, to have leant on him more than on any of her children and to have looked to him for understanding and encouragement, and the notion that she might be holding, by the most sacred feelings, a young man in duress at the outset of his career never for a moment crossed her mind. But that she was holding him in duress is clear from this correspondence.

Even before he left South Africa, Deedes was fretting at what, to him, were the narrow opportunities of a soldier's life. Even then, in the new and strenuous conditions of a campaign, he had to find an outlet for an intellectual activity which all the years of labour since that date have left untired, and at nineteen, as at fifty-eight, he must always be learning something, Dutch or German, history or short-

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hand, Turkish or philosophy. And he was condemned, between 1902 and 1910, to the formal trivialities of a soldier's life in peace-time.

It was a pleasant enough life on the surface. When he came home on leave in 1902 he was formally welcomed at Saltwood, where his brother had triumphantly celebrated his coming-of-age shortly before, and both events were described in the local press in terms suitable to items of major historical importance. There were dinners and speeches, and Wyndham opened a Working Men's Club at Postling and Mrs. Deedes must have felt that her long labours were rewarded. Wyndham loved Saltwood, and his happiest holidays were those spent at the Castle, where he used to go into his mother's bedroom for tea and biscuits in the early morning, before setting out for a run down the long green valley lying under the curve of the Downs. But there were other pleasant leaves also, in that slow-moving, sociable and prosperous London of the opening years of this century, a London of horse-buses and carriages, in which bicycling was still a notable adventure and, in the case of young women, hedged about with restrictions. He told me once that he remembers his sister setting out every morning to wheel her bicycle from Belgrave Square to Battersea Park, where she might mount and ride without affronting public opinion.

In this cosy world of social privilege and strict convention he was lapped and swaddled. After a short period of service in the Bermudas he went to Cork and was appointed A.D.C. to his uncle, General Sir William Knox, and in that position was necessarily involved in all the minutiae of social etiquette, arranging dinner-parties, sending out invitations, making himself amiable to ladies and useful to visitors of importance. And he always hated social gatherings; he is the least gregarious of human beings, and then, as now, would reckon the best hours of

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his life those when he could shut the door and be alone with his books.

"A most pleasant week is over," he writes from Ireland, "the being alone and the immunity from the ordinary cares and petty trivialities of everyday life and being able to indulge my mind to the full in good reading has been to me a great pleasure . . . the end of the week has been completely spoilt by my having to dine with the J.'s last night, and D. the night before."

But there is nearly always a note of apology in these letters to his mother which tell how he has failed to shine in the manner in which she, the most socially minded of people, thought he should, and here is a rueful little account of one such failure which provokes a smile by the puritanical earnestness with which it makes a moral issue of a matter of personal taste :

"Thursday I worked from 10-2 and watched the Gordon Highlanders' games for a short time in the afternoon. . . . The games were a big social function at which I thought I ought to appear but it was a dismal failure on my part as I never spoke to a soul but one or two of the men and finally beat a retreat before tea came on. So I wished I had never been near the place. I hate a failure of that sort. It needed the effort to go and talk to the people but I felt it was not my show and somehow could not bring myself to it. I get worse and worse every day. The fact is, of course, the fewer people I see the worse I get. I don't disguise that from you."

He has never been high-spirited but he does, from time to time in these letters, say that he is happy and has never been happier in his life. This is nearly always when he has been recounting a particularly hard run with hounds. These letters contain an amazing number of descriptions of runs in detail, but he was writing to a hunting woman and they shared the passion ; perhaps he knew obscurely

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that it was the one passion they did genuinely share, though he strove then, and for many years, to mould his tastes and his life to her liking. And then, it is possible that hunting gave Deedes the outlet he needed in an existence he felt so restricted: intense physical activity and a spice of danger. He had one or two nasty falls; on one occasion indeed his horse fell backwards on him off a bank, and in his accounts of these accidents there is a sprightliness which is rare in his writing. A touch of danger really seems to add a flavour to life for him, and he once, speaking of his journeys in the interior of Anatolia, said that it relieved the monotony of travelling to have a brigand or two potting at you from the surrounding hills! This abounding physical energy and an inherent courage were a valuable offset to the extreme delicacy and sensitiveness which is almost painfully apparent in the letters of these early years, a delicacy more feminine than masculine and a sensitiveness which can break its heart over the coarse misdemeanours of his men or the death of his dog. And doubtless they helped to counterbalance in the eyes of his contemporaries his reserve, his unsociableness, his studious habits and his moral earnestness, for in spite of these drawbacks no one ever seems to have accused him of being a prig and he made a very large number of friends.

But the fact which emerges most clearly from the perusal of these letters is his profound aversion to the Army as a career. There is a very long letter to his mother, written in August 1906, when he was twenty-three and had been a soldier for six years. I quote it nearly in its entirety because in no other letter that I have read does he so fully reveal himself, his distaste for the Army, his sense of frustration, the affection and loyalty which made him accept a detested career and the manner in which he came to terms with it.

The occasion of the letter was the question as to whether

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he should return to his Battalion or remain as A.D.C. to General Knox, and he wrote as follows :

“ . . . Professionally, I agree with you though, mind you, with this qualification that I cannot bring myself to consider the matter *purely* from the professional point of view as you might. I cannot treat it from a professional point of view seriously, simply because I have no professional interests — this is nothing new to you or me. . . . Then, as to my returning to the Battalion. You say I would like it. Not in the least. I don't in the least look forward to marching round a barrack square and answering long papers on tactical problems because it's work I dislike. There is only one reason that carries any weight with me [and that] is the fact that it might get me to India and failing anything else I am anxious to get to India because I think it would be good for me in many ways. Otherwise I have no preference at all, I assure you. Whether it's Battalion 1, 2, 3 or 4 — ça m'est égal. . . . My rôle in this [is] : to do my military duties as well as I can with all my might and this, you will allow, I *do* do, but all spare time I devote exclusively to the subjects and pursuits that I am fondest of, and so, you see, whether I am in Cork, Aldershot, India, Timbuctoo or where it is, I should simply apply the above maxim with equal force at any of these places.

“ I have often said to myself”, he continues, “ what my answer would be if someone said to me : ‘ Why on earth did you move heaven and earth to get into the Army only to find that you don't care for the profession ? ’ My answer would be this : ‘ . . . I entered it at a time when everyone should have entered it in some shape or other, viz. in time of war. I entered it at an age when I could not possibly know whether I should like it or not. My education had been such as to fit me for the Army only and so I went into it. . . . ’ So you see the point of view I approach things from. I am always saying to myself

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that it is a pity that I should not be spending the best years of my life in doing work that is congenial to me but I always answer myself that I am at least doing well what I *am* doing, that it's no use indulging in vain regrets and that all I can do is, after expending my *first* energies on my professional duties, my next business is to let my energies run in such channels where I believe they would be most productive — in other words to take up those things I am fondest of. . . . And there's an end of it."

If, in meeting Deedes today, one has the impression of a man who can live unmoved through war and revolution, in crowded cities or a desert hermitage, because he has built an inner fortress against which the tempests of circumstance are unavailing, one sees in that letter how early the building of that fortress was begun and how strong the compulsion that forced him to it.

The letter concludes with a reassurance. One sees that it was impossible for him to set his own wishes in opposition to the wishes and convictions of those he loved. The revolt was over.

"But after all", it runs, "I am telling you nothing fresh, am I? Nor, I swear, can anyone ever reproach me with not doing my best in the work that lies before me. . . . I can truthfully assure you that were I the keenest of soldiers no one could work harder or try harder to become a 'Moltke' than I do. . . . In the long run I never shall leave the Army because I shall never have the opportunity of doing anything else. . . ."

Well, the young man of twenty-three who wrote that was a Brigadier-General at thirty-six, was eight times mentioned in dispatches and had received thirteen decorations and a knighthood when, at the age of forty, he took off his uniform and set out on a pilgrimage to the dark places of our social order. Yet, looking back, one can still pity him for the frustrated years and respect the unselfish loyalty



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to family which made him, untrained, ill-equipped, resign himself to the one profession in which, seemingly, he could earn his living.

Having accepted bondage, Deedes, like a wise creature, did not waste time in kicking against the pricks but directed his energies to filling some of the gaps in the education which he then, and always, considered woefully inadequate. History, science, economics and sociology; studies on Poor Law, on Housing, on the Irish question and on Indian affairs make a formidable tale of reading, but it was not a task to him but an enjoyment. He has the bent of the student and one cannot help speculating as to the direction in which his intellectual powers might have taken him if his early years had been passed at a University, under the direction and with the help of scholars. Years have not blunted the edge of that appetite for knowledge, and even today a new idea, a new approach to some problem, can arouse in him an intellectual excitement which for most of us dies down with our youth. But his study was undirected; nobody guided his steps to the highways of Knowledge, so that often he had to waste time in side-tracks and blind alleys, and one rich tract of country, that of the humanities, was for long an unknown land to this pilgrim. He once, in my hearing, uttered the abominable heresy that he supposed "it was the thing said which was of importance and not the manner of its saying", but he lent a patient ear when I spoke of the overtones of emotion which arise from the ordered pattern of words and enrich and extend the intellectual content; and he has no vanity, he is always ready to go to school and only recently betook himself to a reading of all the Greek dramatists because a book recommended to him dealt with this unfamiliar field.<sup>1</sup>

In these years he taught himself German and shorthand by correspondence courses, a stern enough under-

<sup>1</sup> The book was *Paideia*, a study of Greek education by Werner Jaeger.

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taking, as those who have tried it will know. Shorthand stood him in good stead, and his biographer in even better, for when he was engaged on very confidential work as an Intelligence Officer in 1916-1917 he made copious shorthand notes, and these, huddled away in odd untidy packets, have come to light from family bookcases and cupboards and contributed much to a knowledge of the part he played in that intricate and fascinating piece of history.

In February 1908, he sailed for Malta as A.D.C. to the Governor, Sir Harry Grant, and that was his first step towards his adventures in the Near East.

But first there was the Grand Tour, on which he and his brother were launched in April of the same year. They went first to Athens, touching at Catania, then through the Gulf of Corinth to Smyrna and Constantinople, from thence on the Orient Express through Sofia and Nisch to Budapest and Vienna, and then, "cutting out Rome", to Venice and the Italian Lakes, where they were joined by their mother. It is impossible to think they enjoyed it. Wyndham was greatly tickled by an incident at Catania where, amid the very smart dress and equipages of the residents, he attracted great attention in his old Kerry tweed suit, ". . . rejecting the idea that it could be my good looks," he writes, "I enquired . . . what was the cause. 'It's your Kerry tweed suit!' I was told. 'Depend upon it, if you return in a year you will find it all the rage!' . . . I was much solaced by the thought that I may have given a helping hand to the Distreshful Country."

But he was ill when they got to Athens and had to spend several days in bed gazing at a dirty wallpaper, while his brother very soon began to show signs of boredom. At that age William insisted on applying the standards of England, and the England of his class and tradition, to everything he saw, and how greatly he embarrassed his retiring younger brother may be inferred from passages

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in the long diary-letters which they jointly sent home to their mother. In Venice, Wyndham records that "B. had a brush with the enemy; fought a sharpish rearguard action on the platform" (*i.e.* of the frontier railway station) "in his pyjamas, refusing to have anything opened". How well we all know that attitude, and how greatly it endears us to the foreigner!—And he had the English attitude towards foreign lingo: his French was "abominable" and his German worse and he was always very angry when he was not understood: ". . . To see old B., purple in the face, shouting English to a German who does not understand a word is too ludicrous. I always walk away. How we laugh over it sometimes. He is so like himself, gives tremendous long-winded instructions in a very high voice heard all over the hotel in a tongue perfectly unintelligible to his hearer. . . ." Then comes the ineradicable touch of loyalty: ". . . I have just read this out to him".

In other respects, too, "B." was not an ideal companion for a Grand Tour. The two young men conscientiously "did" Venice and Vienna, Constantinople and Athens, but neither of them was equipped to receive the gifts which there lay before them. They knew nothing of architecture, nothing of pictures; no one had ever taught them what were the special qualities of beauty to look for in a Duccio or Titian, in a Greek temple or a Byzantine church; the education in aesthetics, which is a long and arduous education, had completely passed them by and they gazed at St. Mark's and the Parthenon, the picture galleries of Vienna and Budapest, as young barbarians from the Eton of the nineteenth century. Wyndham, with that avid curiosity of his, wanted at least to *see* what generations of men had called beautiful, and by looking would have learned, but his brother's boredom was a millstone round his neck. They "kicked off at a Picture Gallery with Baedeker," he writes from Vienna, "but B. was bored

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with the pictures, did not care for the subjects and thought the rendering 'extraordinary'". And again, from the same city, "I couldn't stay too long as B. announced at once that he hated all old pictures, the style and subject made him ill. I could see he was so bored that I kept him no longer than necessary." At Budapest Wyndham wanted to settle somewhere for a week or so and practise his German, and they decided not to go further south since "B. is not a very keen sight-seer and would not mind if he were not led round Naples, etc." Both of them, however, did respond to the beauty of the country; B. dwells on it when he is not fulminating against the pictures, and says of the landscape between Nisch and Budapest that it might well be Kent — the highest praise indeed. And they both loved the Italian Lakes, where their mother joined them at Como and they passed the happiest weeks, perhaps the only happy weeks, of this tour so long-planned and at the cost of such economies on the part of their mother. Dated from there is a very characteristic little note from Wyndham which runs: "I never saw such a place, but I feel you know I have no right to be here. It's the effect all these places have on me — I should like to send someone here in my place who was *really* in need of a holiday and rest. I feel it's rather incongruous for idle people like B. and I [*sic*] to sit on the Lake of Como and bask!"

Idleness was still his bugbear in Malta as it had been in Cork and the Bermudas. "If I had not the above [*i.e.* German and shorthand] I really don't know what I should do just now", he wrote to his mother in 1908; "except when it's my week to do parades my only soldiering is a quarter of an hour at the office in the morning. . . . Could you find out for me what would be the third most useful language for me to learn? . . . Now shall it be Turkish, Italian or Persian? I won't take on Russian unless I hear of any good self-teaching system. . . ."

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Chance led him to Turkish because he found in Malta a good Turkish teacher and he set himself to learn it with his usual thoroughness. He attained a remarkable proficiency, both in the spoken and the difficult written language, and by 1914 was accounted one of the best Turkish scholars in Europe; even now, when the reforms of Atatürk have simplified the language and approximated the spoken and the written speech, I have heard comments on the beauty of his literary style. That chance also determined the direction of his life for the next twenty years.

His object in the study of languages — apart from his desire to have “something to show for my time of idleness” — was to qualify for entrance to the Staff College, and already in 1908, when he was beginning Turkish, he passed his examination for a second-class Interpretership in German. But that these modest laurels left him completely dissatisfied a letter written to his mother at this time clearly shows :

“ . . . At times ”, he wrote, “ (I conceal nothing from you) I heartily wish I was out of Malta and really doing something but I look on these as my *last* years of what I call preparative work. I am getting very sick of the smallness of the life and the pettiness and narrowness of the people I meet. It’s almost time I did something. . . . ”

The smallness of the life would not have been the complaint of most young men discharging the very honorific and not very arduous duties of A.D.C. to the Governor of Malta.

A whole posse of royalties visited that sunny isle while he was there and gave him a good deal of practice in the art of handling Royalty with tact. King Edward and Queen Alexandra came in April 1909, and, as everyone knows, they were not always easy guests. There was one terrific moment during their visit: they were due to arrive at Government House for luncheon at 1 P.M. but shortly

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before a message came that they would not arrive before 1.30. It was an extremely hot day and Sir Harry Grant — whose figure was not adapted to a tight uniform in high temperatures — withdrew to take off his tunic and have a little rest; Deedes was left — as he says — kicking his spurs in the hall when at ten minutes past one he heard, to his horror, the Royal Salute. He was in a quandary; should he run and open the doors to receive the King and Queen, or should he rush away to find Sir Harry? He chose the former course and managed to keep the royal guests happily engaged in conversation until Sir Harry, the butler, the footman and all the Staff arrived, flustered enough, and the incident passed without thunder from King Edward, to whom etiquette was no light matter.

At the close of this same formidable visitation Queen Alexandra, who was already very deaf, said to her host, "Sir Harry, you're the only man I've managed to hear on this island." To which he replied, "Yes, Ma'am, I'm the only person who's had the courage to shout at you."

There is a photograph of this function among the Deedes possessions: under the trees on stiff chairs sit King Edward and Queen Alexandra, flanked by the Empress Feodorovna and Princess Victoria and his Excellency and Lady Grant and the Archbishop of Malta, all the women in tight bodices, while balanced on their heads are enormous hats, laden with flowers and feathers and ribbons and looking, in that open-air setting, like trays of offerings at a heathen festival. And there, in the back row, just visible behind the slightly less enormous hat of Princess Victoria, is young Deedes, very neat, very dapper in his tight green uniform, hair sleek, and a tiny fair moustache on his top lip, in conformity with regulations, the very spit of an efficient well-mannered A.D.C. who will hand a parasol and find an ice for a lady.

In the following month, May 1909, there was another

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pair of distinguished visitors, the German Emperor and Empress. Deedes has a pleasant recollection of the Emperor. The British Military Attaché was ill, so it fell to him to go aboard the Emperor's yacht to receive him, a somewhat impressive performance for a young man of twenty-six, with all the ships in harbour dressed and guns firing the salute, while he had to go up the ship's side and step aboard, alone and conspicuous, to make the formal speech of welcome. But the Emperor greeted him with frank kindness and, commenting on the bottle-green uniform of the King's Royal Rifles which he wore, said, "Oh, I see you're a *Jaeger*".

A grand dinner was given on this occasion in honour of the Emperor and Empress, to which all the notabilities of Malta were invited, and when Deedes was going round the banqueting-hall with a footman, laying the name cards in their places (one of the duties he found particularly distasteful), the door opened and the Emperor walked in. He looked at the cards on the table, exclaimed "But these are all wrong", and proceeded to place them himself, in accordance with the order of precedence which he considered suitable. But he arranged a dramatic entry at the reception that night, for when all the guests were assembled the great doors at the end of the room were flung back and there, framed in the opening, was the Emperor in white uniform. Impressively he made a tour of the room, with a word to each guest of any importance, and when he reached Deedes he smiled and said, "Hullo, here's the *Jaeger*!"

That Deedes did not take his notabilities with too great seriousness another couple of his anecdotes makes evident. When he was still in Cork, as A.D.C. to Sir William Knox, the Marquess of Aberdeen, then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and the Duke of Devonshire came on a visit, and when all was over it was Deedes' duty to see them off by train. But

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he lost the Duke of Devonshire! He had the Marquess and Marchioness and the Staff all comfortably installed, but at the scheduled time of departure no Duke, and even an Irish train leaves some time. After a frantic search Deedes finally ran him to earth in the station waiting-room, fast asleep.

And on the same occasion of this visit one of those incidents occurred which should make all properly constituted A.D.C.s turn in their graves. While the Commandant and his Staff and the guard of honour were waiting for the arrival of the Lord Lieutenant, Deedes noticed a man in civilian clothes walking up and down in front of the entrance. He asked someone who it was and was informed that it was a plain-clothes detective, so let him be, but when the Lord Lieutenant alighted from his carriage the man stepped forward and, with a bow, handed his card. He was the leading bootmaker in Cork!

But this kind of life, the fun of it, the impressiveness of it, touched only the surface of his existence, and in that very photograph in which he is standing behind Princess Victoria he is gazing away over the heads of the company, far out of the picture, as if the proceedings had nothing whatever to do with him, as if he had detached himself from those around him and gone away into a realm where flowers and feathers and grandeur and an opportunity to climb a rung of the golden ladder of success did not exist.



## *Chapter Four*

DEEDES was not a young man without ambitions. He had immense energy, physical and intellectual, and he felt within himself a reservoir of powers and abilities which nothing in his life up to that time had tapped ; part, indeed, of the melancholy and unease of those years arises from frustration, the sense that the talent was buried and there seemed small chance that it would ever be traded to enrich the commerce of the world. It was impossible for him to use the social opportunities which came to him in Cork and Malta for his own advancement ; it was not that kind of advancement he wanted, nor in that world. So he went dourly on with his studies, preparing himself for he knew not what, but determined not to waste the precious years in trivialities. Having taken up the study of Turkish he pursued it with his usual ardour, and his daily lesson with the old scholar at length came to be regarded as part of the order of things. Sir Harry would release him from social obligations or strict attendance so that he might go to his studies ; indeed it appears, from one or two chance remarks in Deedes' letters home, that Sir Harry and the senior officers had respect, as well as affection, for a young man not content to drift on the tide of sports, games and parties, but determined to make something of his life and himself.

Already in March 1909, he was interested in the possibility of going to Turkey to serve in the Gendarmerie, for he wrote to his mother : " We happened last night at

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dinner (we three) to be talking about the Gendarmerie. Algy reminded me that a circular had come round while we were at Cork, asking for officers. He had sent in his name in a fit of zeal and then withdrawn it. French (*i.e.* General French) . . . would probably say that from a soldiering point of view it was a useless thing to do, and would probably be right. But you know that my reasons for wanting to go are different — into all of which I am not now going. . . . But I cannot see why for two or three years it would not be an interesting thing to do, in the light of the alternative, which is an existence here. . . .”

There is no extant answer to that letter, but there may well have been opposition from home, since he returned to his argument a few weeks later. It was not until he had passed his examination for a Second-Class Interpretership in Turkish, in November 1909, however, that he was able to apply to be seconded for service in the Gendarmerie.

The Gendarmerie, officered by Europeans, was part of a scheme of reform forced upon Abdul Hamid in 1904 by Austria-Hungary and Russia to try to end the state of anarchy which prevailed in Macedonia and had found violent expression in the revolt of the Bulgarian minority in 1903, brutally suppressed. Three other Great Powers, France, Great Britain and Italy, were not prepared to disinterest themselves in the fate of Turkey and her Balkan neighbours, and Macedonia was therefore divided into five districts with, respectively, an Austrian, Russian, French, British and Italian officer to superintend the reorganization of the Gendarmerie. In 1908, after the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Austria, the Young Turk revolution took place and the Turkish Parliament was reopened after thirty years' suppression. The five Great Powers, believing that constitutional rule would protect the Christian minorities, agreed to the withdrawal of foreign administrators, but disturbances broke out once more in April

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1909, with the usual accompaniment of massacre and pillage ; Abdul Hamid was deposed and the new Government forced to accept foreign intervention again. An Englishman (Crawford) was appointed to reorganize the Customs services ; another Englishman was associated with Cjavid Pasha to deal with the Public Debt ; Talaat Pasha at the Ministry of Interior was assisted by Innes ; and a German, General von der Goltz, was Military Adviser. The Gendarmerie was reconstituted, but changed its name from the Macedonian to the Turkish Gendarmerie and was transferred to Asia Minor. It was a military police force and its duties were to put down brigandage, protect peaceful folk, prevent blood feuds, stop smuggling and, in general, substitute an orderly and disciplined body in place of the old undisciplined and oppressive force which, under the shelter of authority, had often been indistinguishable from the brigands.

When Deedes arrived in Constantinople in February 1910, he entered on that wider scene on which, in varying rôles, the remainder of his life has passed. He left for all time the narrow circle of official and social duties which characterized the peace-time Army life of the years before 1914. In Turkey he found his first opportunity : he found adventure ; he found an outlet for his immense repressed energy ; he experienced the discipline of severe physical hardship ; he came to know men of all nationalities and rank and to form his judgment of them, unhampered by the conventions of race, religion or behaviour in which he had been bred ; he saw the cruelties of the Balkan wars, and in relief of the wounded and of refugees his administrative ability and his profound humanitarianism found their proper channel ; the wider field of politics to which his aspirations had turned even at seventeen was opened to him. So profound has been the influence on his subsequent career of the four years from 1910 to 1914, and so quickly

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did he rise from being an obscure young officer of the Turkish Gendarmerie to a post in the Ministry of Interior under the Turkish Government, that he is still called "Deedes Bey" by many, that name under which he became so widely known in so few years. For the first time in his life too — and perhaps for the last — he was happy. He was released from the bondage of the barrack-square and the no less uncongenial servitude of the social round; the horizon had widened boundlessly and his opportunity had come.

His first characteristic action after reaching Constantinople and delivering his letters of introduction was to set about perfecting his Turkish! He engaged two teachers; with one, a young Government official, he studied five times a week with special attention to the difficulties of the written, literary language; with the other, who knew no English, he spent his days reading Turkish newspapers, going round the cafés of Stamboul and mixing in purely Turkish circles, acquiring, with a colloquial knowledge of the language, an acquaintance with the Turkish point of view, the opinions, aspirations and mental make-up of the people among whom he was to live.

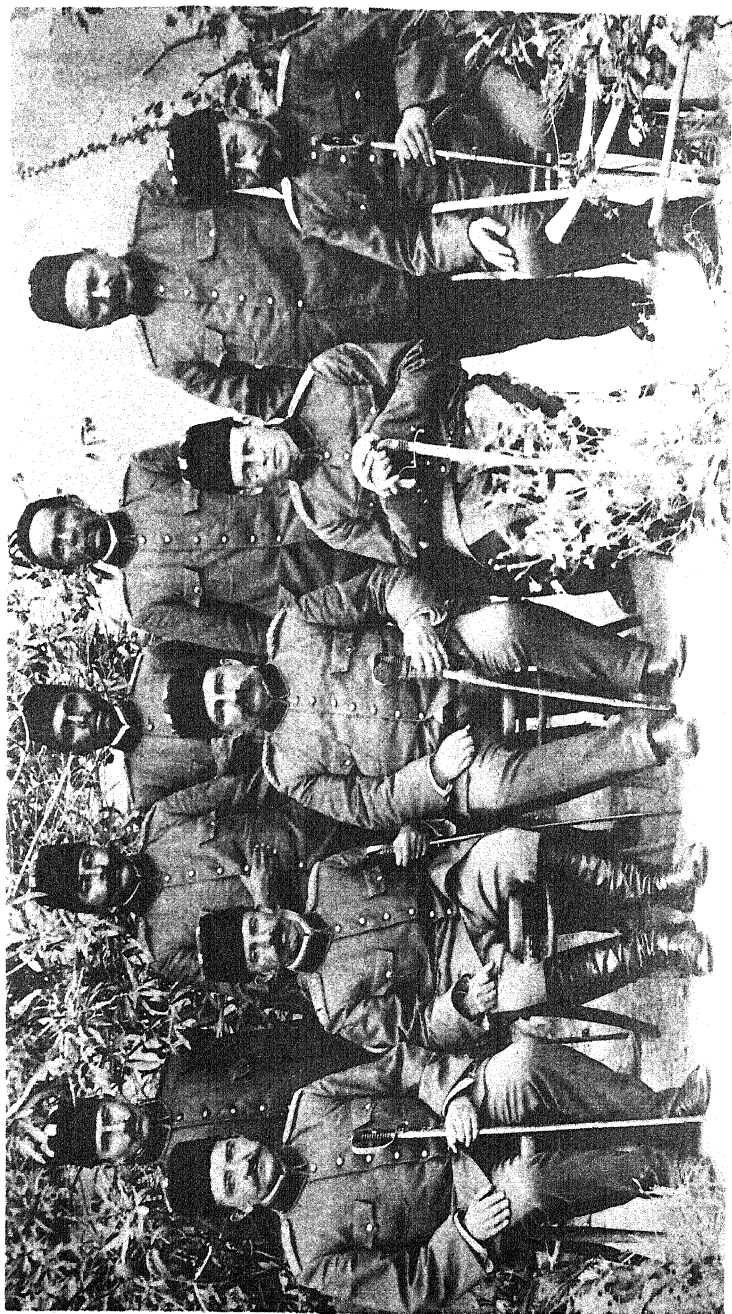
In the two months during which he remained in Constantinople he met many of the Englishmen who were attempting to bring some measure of order into that disorderly Empire: Fitzmaurice, the First Dragoman; Crawford; Tyrrell, the Military Attaché; and Robert Graves, of the Levant Consular Service, who in 1906 had been appointed to the Financial Commission under Hilmi Pasha, to assist with the duties of the Turkish Treasury. Graves and Deedes came to know each other very well; they worked together during the Great War and the sympathy between them seems to have been immediate. Graves, in his book *Storm Centres of the Near East*, records his first impression. "Shortly after", he writes, "there arrived

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in Constantinople a man who was to have a large share in my life during the remaining years in the Near East and to whom in many ways I owe more than words can express. This was Wyndham Deedes. . . . I was at once struck by his possession of wisdom and understanding beyond his years, coupled with an extraordinary facility in acquiring the language of the country."

His knowledge of the language was to stand him in good stead from the outset, for when in May he went to Smyrna, the headquarters of the Gendarmerie, he was told by Colonel Hawker, his chief, that he was to be sent to Tripoli in Africa. At the same time he was handed a mass of correspondence in Turkish, dealing with conditions in Tripoli and Benghazi and containing confidential reports about the officers who would serve under him, and, as he says, "the being able to read this sort of thing myself will be of the greatest value. . . ."

He landed at Derna, on the North African coast, on May 23rd, and his first piece of work was to listen to the despairing complaints of the Turkish officer in charge there: "'I beg of you,' he said, 'get us clothes; secondly, get our numbers increased . . . and thirdly, get us some sort of barracks' ". In that single sentence one may see something of the problem with which Deedes had to deal: the organization of a force appointed to keep order in outlying districts of an immense tract of wild country, but few in numbers, ragged, badly housed, often unpaid and inevitably tempted by their poverty to levy blackmail on the civil population. The conditions which obtained at Derna, which was "your true North African oasis: a few palm trees, a few houses, the Desert . . .", obtained also at Benghazi, "a God-forsaken-looking spot . . . no trees, high wind full of sand . . ."; they applied indeed to the whole of the district Deedes had been sent to organize. This district was four times the size of France, stretching



W. D. with his Gendarmes, Tripoli, 1910



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from the Mediterranean to the southern borders of the Libyan desert, almost to Lake Chad ; there were no railways, hardly any roads, and a mere handful of gendarmes scattered about at distances from Deedes' headquarters at Tripoli varying from a day's journey to a month's, on horse or camel. And he had no money, no maps of this enormous area, no census or other returns to guide him in recruiting or in assigning his few men to their different posts — no wonder he says, " I hardly know where to begin ".

But how he enjoyed it ! He was just twenty-seven and this was his first independent command ; he was days away, even in the city of Tripoli, from the nearest European officer ; everything depended upon himself, upon his intelligence, his energy and his courage, since his work was almost as unmapped as the country, of which the interior was largely marked " sandy waste ".

He began, characteristically and wisely, by quill-driving, and reports in his letter home that his first day's work was in his office, from eight in the morning till six-thirty in the evening, dealing with a mass of correspondence single-handed, since he had not even a clerk to help him. He had to read and sort out multifarious complaints and requests, issue orders in Turkish and prepare his first report to be sent to Smyrna, in French, in duplicate. Even this did not exhaust his energy for he could still finish the day with a long and lively account to his mother of the proceedings : ". . . However, that's all right and I am doing nicely and making everyone feel happy and the Turks think I'm a wonder and imagine that in a few weeks it will all be done and finished and we shall all . . . live happy ever afterwards and so on ! . . . I paid the Vali <sup>1</sup> an official visit the day I arrived and he was most complimentary and nice. Yesterday I went alone in uniform with a nasty-looking little bit of paper and a list of some dozen demands. Poor

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* the Governor.



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man nearly fainted, the day was hot and the slip of paper wanted such a lot of swallowing that I left him half an hour after, a physical wreck." And he concludes with a school-boyish joke at his own expense: ". . . I am expecting to hear of the death of our French Colonel at Smyrna when he gets my report. . . . I hopelessly mixed my masculines and feminines and spelt the past participle of 'pouvoir' with a 't'. . ."—hardly to be wondered at, considering that he had been writing in two foreign languages that day, for ten hours, unaided!

He surveyed his district — in the mind's eye, since maps were lacking — sitting in his hot little office in Tripoli. His province was nominally divided into four districts: Tripoli, Barca, Jebbel Garb on the north, east and west, and Fezzan far to the south between the Libyan and Saharan deserts, though in this wild land of mountain and desert no explicit boundaries were possible. But, since there was no railway and the roads were very few, save for the caravan routes which all ran from north to south to debouch into the great main route that crosses the Sahara to Lake Chad, the only part of the country which could be effectively patrolled was the strip along the coast, extending inland to the depth of a few days' journey on horseback, and the district westward, towards Tunisia. Fezzan was a month's camel-journey from the headquarters in Tripoli, and in all the time in which he was in Africa Deedes never managed to visit it, feeling that he could not absent himself for so long from the work he had already organized, balanced precariously between the chasms of Turkish apathy and inefficiency. Yet the problem of policing the interior was urgent; as Deedes says, he might receive a wire any morning of the week, stating that Corporal So-and-so had been killed and asking if this-one-or-that could be appointed in his place, and always following up the information with a request for more men and more officers and a pressing plea

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that he should visit Fezzan. But men recruited in Tripoli would not go to Fezzan, which was to them a strange and dangerous country, while no Turkish officer "would dream of going", so that altogether there was justification for his remark that legislating for Fezzan from Tripoli was like sitting in London to legislate for the Arctic!

Meanwhile, brigandage was almost a national occupation and murders and blood feuds were so common as hardly to invite comment. "We came over the hills," he says in a letter of September 1910, "as there was a spot I wanted to look at where I propose having a post.<sup>1</sup> Only the day before some bandits had taken a man and his camel and carried him off to the hills."

And in March 1911 a member of the American Exploration Society, excavating at Cyrene, was shot at and killed, as he was walking up to the diggings, by two Arabs who had lain in ambush for him. "The country," writes Deedes, "as I told you, is by no means as safe as London . . . but until I started I had no idea it was as unsafe as it is. The American murder you know about. At Benghazi the French consul was shot at. The other day, on the road I came [by], they shot a Gendarme and took his rifle. Yesterday we passed a spot where, a few days ago in open daylight, ten Eshkia (*i.e.* bandits) had held up a Government post and shot a soldier. . . . The Kaymakam<sup>2</sup> of Meij not only dare not go out of the village, but walks about in the village with two soldiers and a Gendarme, fully armed. . . ."

Here were conditions of lawlessness and disorder which might well have daunted an older and more experienced man than he; there was everything to do and most inadequate tools with which to do it, but it was now, when he was thrown completely on his own resources, that he came

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* a military post or *karakol*.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* mayor or headman of a village.

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into his own and developed the powers which had lain so long dormant.

His first project was to set up a school. Here he proposed to train officers, N.C.O.s and men, and, by boldly dismissing officers he knew to be corrupt or inefficient, by promoting others and by selecting the least untrustworthy men to be N.C.O.s, to establish the nucleus of a reliable body and to develop among them an *esprit de corps*. It is one of the cardinal principles on which Deedes works that men can be brought to an honest pride in themselves and their work, and in his school for gendarmes he made his first essay, with most intractable material, in implementing a conviction to which much of his later success in social reform is due.

It was surely one of the strangest schools ever set up. Having found a building, Deedes had first to cope with the problem of having it put into a moderate state of cleanliness and repair, and to get this done he had to break his way through the barriers of dilatoriness and inefficiency even to obtain the necessary timber, and to expend much tact adjudicating in a dispute over the quarrying of stone. But at last the men moved in, on a wet afternoon, after a formal opening ceremony for which Deedes arranged the programme, putting in the killing and roasting of a sheep before the item "refreshments". Then, having given out blankets and coats, he left them at 6 P.M. expressing the pious hope (in his evening letter home) that they hadn't all run away. His duties included those of a Kindergarten teacher, for he had to show the men how to make their beds and to go round from time to time to see that windows were opened, otherwise the whole class fell asleep! As he writes on June 27th, 1910, "we go into the school today and the bare idea of getting a hundred men there and their clothes and blankets and belongings being quite beyond the capabilities of four men I have had to run it all. . . .

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Well, anyway, now I have assumed supreme control we have a sort of Deputy-head of School till the arrival of the promised one from Smyrna (he of course will *never* come). . . .” He had a virgin field for education ; two-thirds of his officers were illiterate and the standard among the men can well be imagined. So he set to work to teach them and reports that he is himself taking classes in geography, Turkish history and arithmetic, which gives a pretty clear indication of his mastery of the language. The inducement to the men to pursue this thorny path of learning was a simple one : nearly all his recruits were counted as men of the *Deuxième Catégorie*, so that pay was wretched, hardly a subsistence allowance, and it was only after they had passed an examination which Deedes proposed to hold that they could be ranked as *Première Catégorie* and win a substantial increase in pay. The school, in spite of its mental labours and unwelcome hygiene, was popular and recruiting was brisk ; on the first day of the taking of recruits “ the town went mad ”, and all, Arabs, Jews and Turks, went in procession round the streets and crowded to hear the *Firman* read to them. Having got his men and begun to teach them, Deedes’ next endeavour was to clothe them, since — as in South Africa — he “ hated the thought of his men going about in rags ” and dishevelment has always an adverse effect on morale. Even here it was not plain sailing, since “ my first consignment of clothing from Smyrna was blue with *Kalpaks* as head-dress. My second is *brown*, with *Fezzes* as head-dress. What the deuce can one do with parti-coloured clothing ? ”

In spite of all, the school flourished, and in March 1911, ten months after his arrival in the country, the Grand Examination took place.

It was due to be held on March 13th, but though Deedes and one or two of the examiners turned up and waited, there were so many absentees from the Board, as well as all the

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examinees themselves, who had not been warned for attendance, that it was postponed till the following day. March 13th happened to be the Prophet's Birthday and a big Marabut procession was due to take place, as well as plenty of other religious amusement, so after waiting a while Ahmed Bey, President of the Board, remarked philosophically: "Oh well, it's all the same; let's enjoy our holiday and put the exam off."

The following day was Sunday, but Deedes of course turned up at 8 A.M., the hour appointed, and, equally of course, the remainder of the Board turned up half an hour late. Here is his account of the proceedings:

"Coffee and an hour's talk. I then hinted we should start. Half an hour to find the examinees. Enter Number 1 — each was to have five questions.

"Ahmed Bey to Muhassem, 'Go on, you ask him.'

"M., 'Excuse me, but you ask him' (this is politeness).

"'No, no, you ask him . . .,' and so on till finally one *did* ask a question.

"Answer no sooner given than violent discussion occurred between members as to whether it was correct. This lasted some ten minutes till I mildly said, 'As it's the gendarme whose knowledge we wish to ascertain, hadn't we better proceed and discuss the matter later?'

"Well, the first man took three-quarters of an hour. As we had twenty-five men I foresaw what would happen. I may say the last man took three minutes at 11 P.M. last night, when three members went fast asleep and I did the questioning with one other!

"Well, exit No. 1. Now the marking. Total for each subject, 45. President Ahmed Bey to the Board, 'Well, what do you think?' Each member in turn, 'Excuse me, Effendim, but really I shouldn't like to say.' Ahmed Bey, 'Well, I'm President, my vote comes last. You must say.' *Members*, 'No, really we don't know.'

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"Then (which I had foreseen) Ahmed Bey, 'Well, I think if Deedes Bey settled the marking it would be a good thing.' . . . For number one subject I said '30'. He wrote down 29. For number two subject 35. He wrote down 34, for, as he said, 'It will never do to put down round numbers, odd numbers look so much more real and genuine.'

"Well, this went on till 11 A.M. when (as I also foresaw) they all got terribly bored, till Ahmed Bey finished up and said he must go, he had an engagement, would one of us act for him? However, that wasn't good enough, so we settled to adjourn till 8 P.M."

The interval was seemingly spent agreeably by the Board of Examiners, for the account continues :

"At 8 P.M. I arrived and found a well-fed-looking and very sleepy Board ; jackets unbuttoned and so on. Well, the thing proceeded slowly and slowly, the questions getting shorter and shorter and the intervals longer and longer. At 9 P.M. Ahmed Bey chucked questioning ! At 9.30 Muhassem got fed up. He was taking religion and *ran* through his questions, for, as he said, 'He was not born a philosopher.' At 10 P.M. President dropped asleep till 11 P.M. At 10.30 another member did the same. My opportunity, as some of the candidates were a bit shaky, so, as I did the questioning, I managed I think to get them through. The marking I dictated.

"Well, we finally got done at 11 P.M. President gently aroused.

" 'Why, you've passed them all,' he said.

" 'Yes,' I said, 'because they all answered correctly.'

" 'But we can't pass them all,' he said.

" 'Why not ? ' I said.

" 'You can't in an exam : think of the effect ; you must fail a few. Why, the other men in the school will all stop working if we pass them all. It's always necessary in exams

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to fail a few,' he said. 'I *never* did an exam when all passed.'

" 'Very well,' I said.

" And so we had to fail two, but I was *quite satisfied*."

There are several photographs of Deedes with his gendarmes, and a very smart, efficient-looking lot of men they are in their close-fitting uniforms and fezzes, all of them towering over the small slight figure of their English officer, who wears his fez with as much of an air as any of them.

After a month in Tripoli, Deedes did what he had projected from his very first experience at Derna and Benghazi and began a series of tours in his district, extending from a few hours' ride to journeys of hundreds of miles. The accounts he sent home of these journeys give a vivid and possibly unique picture of a vast tract of country which had then been visited by few Westerners, where conditions had changed very little in hundreds of years, save for the substitution of the rifle as a weapon of murder for the spear or scimitar, and where the habits and customs of a large part of the population were essentially the same as in the first century after the Prophet. And as he was one of the few so he was one of the last to see that country in its primitive state, for after the annexation by Italy in 1911 roads and railways were built and the tide of a mechanized civilization, with its accompaniment of new ideas and new standards of living, began to invade this hitherto unmapped and unexplored land.

The journeys were often arduous, made on horseback, with no possibility of food or rest till a village was reached, where the traveller must sleep and eat at the local khan, or inn, if there was one, and failing that at the house of the village headman. Nearly all were indescribably filthy, and the thing from which Deedes suffered most was vermin; he had no immunity from attack, like his Turkish companions, and is besides of a very sensitive habit of body, so that the bugs used to give him a high fever until he hit

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on the plan of having a large muslin bag made, into which he crawled every night and tied it up above his head. The food was another of his horrors ; he is a very light eater and the only things he ever seems to relish are tea and coffee, jam and fruit, yet at the end of a long day's ride, without either food or water, he would be faced with an enormous greasy mass of coarse meat which he must either eat or starve, or worse still offend his hosts. But in spite of these disabilities he is as tough as whipcord and has, besides, trained himself by an unremitting discipline to an iron endurance of heat, cold, hunger, thirst, fatigue and pain. He once did a tour in Anatolia suffering from toothache so severely that he could eat no solid food and had to live on eggs and *yoğurt*, and I myself have seen him take the chair at a committee when he had an enlarged spleen, the after-effects of an attack of malaria, and could not move without pain, yet with an intellect unclouded and no diminution of his habitual patience and courtesy.

Such physical endurance earned him the respect of the Eastern peoples among whom he moved and they used to say of him : " By Allah ! like iron, no rest ! " These journeys were most valuable, not only in giving him first-hand knowledge of the conditions with which he had to deal but also by impressing his personality on a large number of people. They succeeded too in keeping a sense of discipline among his gendarmes in the outlying districts, since neither they, nor the local worthies, could ever be sure that the small, sun-scorched officer, with the light blue eyes and the gentle voice, would not descend upon them any day and look upon their shortcomings with that cold and penetrating eye and point out their misdemeanours in that gentle voice, speaking Turkish as fluent as their own and more elegant.

Whatever the physical hardships, he enjoyed his journeys ; all was new, vivid and strange ; he loved the



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solitariness of that wide country, the beauty of the moonlit nights, the occasional halt at night by the fire of thorn ; the contact, unhampered by the conventions against which he had so long rebelled, with all sorts and conditions of folk. And he had an eye for the comic in men and events. The long letters which he sent home at this time, and which constitute a kind of diary of these years, have a sprightliness which appears only in rare flashes in the writing of other years. Deedes is no literary genius ; in his youthful correspondence he stumbles in the use of words, as will have been apparent from the extracts given, and though now he has trained himself to write with fluency, point and correctness, it is not in the written word that his personality reveals itself : he lives, in some ways, uniquely ; he writes like hundreds of others. In the letters of these years in Turkey the style is all his own, staccato, telegraphic, as full of exclamation marks and dashes as is usually believed to be the MS. of a " lady novelist ", punctuated in a fine free manner, and careless of rules of grammar and syntax. But what vividness of description he achieves ! How he makes a scene, a character or an incident come to life for the reader ! He could never recapture that style, as he could never recapture the freshness of the experience, the first impact of a wild, primitive and picturesque Eastern country on a young man from the West, carefully bred and hedged about with the ordered ideals of his nation and class. Thirty years have passed and he has come to know the Near East so well that it is almost as familiar to him as Kent. Because of that familiarity he can understand its problems, sympathize with its aspirations as only a few of his countrymen can, and help to guide its counsels ; but no longer can he see the fun and the strangeness of it ; that has passed with the young man of twenty-seven who rode through unmapped Tripoli.

Here is an account of one of his earlier, and shorter

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journeys, undertaken in the month of July when the thermometer in his verandah stood at 92° and it was hot enough, as he told his mother, to fry an egg in the sun.

"I left here at 6 A.M. and with Mehmet Effendi and Ramazan Onbasi (corporal) set out for Si Bru Nur . . . its importance is derived from its one Khan (that's all it consists of) lying at the mouth of the Déri (*i.e.* Kloof) in which 'wicked men lie hid seeking whom they may devour' as the caravans go by — and I had decided to have a post<sup>1</sup> here. . . . We had a long ride back of 4½ hours to Tajura. . . . The Mudri [Mayor] met us a half-hour outside the village. A man as round as a ball, one eye, very hearty, seated on a mule of his own breeding and famous as a great pacer. He was full of apologies at not being able to offer us a proper meal but had he known the day before that the Bey would honour his servant etc. etc. . . . My heart sank, these feeding orgies terrify me! We arrived and went to the Mayoralty, water and soap were brought and the usual compliments made. Then a huge tray on which were: a dish of — well, on the top poached eggs, underneath a two-inch layer of — I can't say — I met every conceivable thing mixed up in a sort of pastry. Another dish of meat and another and another and vegetables and bread — in the middle a wash-hand basin full of pilaw. Three wooden spoons and that's all. We commenced by the Mudri seizing on — what looked like the hind leg of a donkey — biting off a piece and offering me the remainder. To honour his house and perpetuate the friendship! Well, to make a long meal short I did my level best. Thank goodness we ate in the dark with the help of one candle and I now and then got in a back-hander of donkey and sent it over the garden wall. . . . After that we left at 9 and somehow got home in pitch dark soon after 11 P.M. I found my face looked like a polished red tile with a small

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* gendarme post.

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white band at the top where my cap had been . . . next time I am going to do as the Arabs and buy a silk shawl and wind it all round my head and face leaving only the eyes.

“*Later.* I rejoiced to find today that Mehmet Effendi was in bed and ‘knocked up’. Considering he is a native to the place I feel rather proud of doing what I calculate was about 42 miles with nothing worse than a burnt nose.”

Mehmet Effendi was his frequent companion on these tours and hard put to it to keep pace with his wiry Chief, for his figure was ample and, until the arrival of Deedes, he had not been used to taking violent exercise in the sun ; as Deedes says of an earlier excursion, “his horse was bitted in such a way . . . that he did nothing but dance the Polka under a hot sun in such a way as to leave several lbs. of Mehmet *en route*. Of this I was glad — though it was bad for his uniform. . . .” All the officers were eventually subjected to this same drastic reducing treatment, for Deedes saw that every one of them was provided with a horse so that there might be no excuse for their not visiting the outlying posts for which they were responsible. Spiritual pride struggled with physical discomfort, for the Senior Officer announced to him, “We are all Cavalry now”, and Deedes’ comment is, “Poor dears, it’s downright cruelty to some ! Still, it will kill or cure obesity !”

His next trip was to Benghazi, to which he went by sea, accompanied by the ubiquitous Mehmet Effendi and being seen off with great ceremony by all his officers, “who”, says he, “I can’t help thinking were rather glad to get rid of me in this hot weather for one month, though we are all excellent friends”.

In Benghazi he had a formidable task. The province — Cyrenaica — is some 90,000 square miles in extent, separated from Tripoli on the west by the Desert of Syrt, from Egypt on the east by the Libyan Desert Plateau, while to the south

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lies the immense Libyan Desert itself. Into this enormous, wild and unpoliced area came Deedes, "not too welcome", as he says, for disorder was rife, the officers were apathetic and in no mood to work and hustle; barracks — where they existed — were insanitary and ramshackle; pay was in arrears and, since nearly all the officers were "poor as Church mice" and had large families, the temptation to accept bribes or to blackmail the inhabitants was strong. Yet, although he had come to make trouble, and the Turks knew well that those who persisted in their evil or slipshod ways would be relentlessly dealt with, he seems to have won from them that respect and liking which have been given in such large measure by all men with whom he deals. Here was a man who could neither be flattered nor cajoled, but if he demanded hard work from them he himself worked harder; if he set his face against bribery and extortion he was ready to listen to every man's grievances, to redress every wrong and never to turn a deaf ear or a cold eye to suffering or hardship. Though he said, in one of his letters, that he could do little there with his limited money, his few gendarmes and the huge extent of the district, none the less he did leave an impression of an official rare in the experience of these people: incorruptible, efficient, ruthless in dealing with bad characters, but accessible to all; wise, tolerant and sympathetic to every genuine story of distress.

## Chapter Five

HE was back in Tripoli by mid-August, after a journey in company with some seven hundred and fifty wild Arabs who, with their horses and a half-dozen cows, crowded the decks and made "a litter . . . which you will find equals 6" thick muck and smells to suit! . . . Sea mill-pond," he continues, "weather cool to chilly, food abominable; companions: large Turkish family, Madame, rather pretty, five or six children on the annual produce scale from 2-8 years, any one of which I would willingly have wrung the neck of, and two fat nigger girls as nurses dressed à l'Européen — result ludicrous — two station Archaeologists . . . and that's all."

Arriving home, he found a first-class domestic row in the kitchen, his servant Brengali having threatened to cut the throat of his orderly and his orderly being afraid to come near the house, and he also found belated letters from Smyrna instructing him to formulate a scheme for the reorganization of the Gendarmerie on the lines there laid down with the amount of money and the number of men available. As he had been engaged for three months in preparing a detailed plan with maps showing the number of men he considered necessary for each post, and had dispatched it from Benghazi, it was a somewhat depressing home-coming, but he contented himself with remarking mildly, "Bother them, it's bad enough without the servants fighting!" He then proceeded to plan an extensive tour of inspection to his further-lying districts, since he felt

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released from the corvée of office work until the situation was clarified from Smyrna.

His first trip took him westwards through Zahzur, Zavia and Zuara towards the Tunisian border, and the description of his journeys which he jotted down day by day are of surpassing interest, though it is impossible to quote more than a few of the pen-pictures which, unconsciously and without art, he draws.

From Zuara he writes: "We reached Agilat about 8.30 . . . too late to buy food so we fed off a tin of sardines and a loaf of bread. Of course this game I am now at is real campaign without the bullets. . . . Such a dirty place and such smells. Our company—swallows and one bat. . . ."

"Here I am sitting on a box in a small tumble-down room in an old farm-house or Kazr (*i.e.* castle) as they call it here, which is used as a barracks for the soldiers. One house on the edge of the water and nothing else but the desert, West, East and South, and the Mediterranean to the North. One old Turkish officer and his few men. The poor old boy never sees a soul of course and turned out today at 3 A.M. to welcome us. We left Zuara at 7 P.M. Did four hours and then just as the moon rose we halted at a well and had dinner. . . . Lovely night, cool to chilly, moon and good going—all Karoo veldt. We were followed by wolves a short distance."

The following month, September, he went eastwards through Barca and Homs, near which lie the ruins of the Roman city of Lebda, through country different from that lying towards Tunisia, potentially very fertile, able to grow figs, grapes and olives and support a large population, but undeveloped and poverty-stricken. In this year, 1910, the Moslem Holy Month of Ramazan fell in September and Deedes was invited by Turkish and Arab hosts to the feasts of Ramazan, to which, in his day, very few "unbelievers" had ever been admitted.

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The first in which he ever took part was on September 14th at Tefara, which "consisted only of an old Kazr, the usual prison, Mudir's rooms and Gendarmerie". Here is his description of the meal :

"The Mudir was away so we were invited to feed by another notable. Carpets were brought in, a table top (no legs) set on the ground, round which we all, some 10 of us, sat. The table was about the size of an ordinary card-table. All round the edge of it was flanked with bread and we had the following dishes :—started with cheese, olives, honey and jam, then soup, eggs, three or four meat dishes, grapes, water-melon. All the dishes frightfully peppery. Fingers of course all the time and you can imagine the scene with those ten men gobbling away, who had not fed for twelve hours. Not a word was spoken. Before dinner, as it approached sundown, one could see the suppressed excitement. As the sun got lower and lower, Mehmet ordered a glass of water to be set before him ; finally, as the sun disappeared, 'God be praised !' they all said. Mehmet quaffed off his water and out came the food which was all ready waiting. At table, it was such agony to me to sit like a Turk (the rheumatism in my knees precludes my doing so) that on their entreaties, as they said it made them unhappy to see me so uncomfortable, I sat on a low stool. All the company were Arabs so I understood little. After dinner they all went and prayed. . . . After prayer, nargileys were produced and then we all sat in the light of the moon, to the sound of the gurgling of the nargileys . . ."

There was another visit on this same trip when Deedes had the opportunity to exercise his diplomatic art. His companion, Mehmet, had been invited by some Arab friends to have his "second meal", that is the meal between sundown and sunrise, with them and to eat quails, so they arrived about midnight and were ushered into a

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low mud room, lit by two candles, and having a low dais at one end, spread with mats. Their host was a Marabut and he lived there with his old wife and their seven grown sons, with daughters-in-law and children, all in one small house, and "after the usual salaams the old man came in and fell on Mehmet's neck and, according to their custom, went through the process of making the kissing noise. . . ." Deedes was then introduced as a very wise and learned man ; he had ridden the whole way from Sliten and never uttered a word — he is still, be it said, capable of this remarkable taciturnity — and the old Marabut, anxious to impress the wise guest, informed him that he was the father of seven sons but that he had one son most beloved, for he said his prayers five times a day and brought bread and meat to his father, which the others did not : ". . . he then went on to say that, no matter what religion you belonged to, Jewish, Christian or Moslem, Allah rewarded especially those who honoured their parents ".

When Deedes had suitably endorsed this piece of special pleading, tea was drunk, sugared and spiced, and after the quails had been eaten the beloved son, the Joseph of the family, raised his voice in prayer — which doubtless annoyed the other six — while the rest of the company kept up a chorus of "Allahs". Among those thus piously occupied was a friend of the family who had acted as guide to Deedes' party from Sliten and who "until recently was a well-known bandit and robber on this road ; he then made a contract with the Government to serve them and took over the responsibility for the safety of this road, since when there have been no murders or robberies. . . ."

When prayers were over the old mother came in and also fell on Mehmet's neck, whereupon, says Deedes, "I conveyed my admiration and congratulations at the fine family which the good lady had given the country and trusted that with the mercy of Allah she would have many



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more, which considering she's a grandmother you may say was an unnecessary remark on my part, but in point of fact the old gentleman had himself said he *would* with Allah's help have more children, so that my remark was most opportune and appreciated. However, I remain sceptical rather."

It was not only these trips into wild country which provided matter for vivacious description. There was the whole mixed society of the towns, Tripoli or Benghazi, where French and British and Italian and German consuls rubbed shoulders with Arabs, Turks and Jews, yet each community remained a separate entity, adhering strictly to its own customs, fanatically attached to the habits and outlook brought from Bradford or Nantes, from Stamboul or an Umbrian city or the uncharted desert where the Arabs were bred. Among them came young Deedes, and at once found himself to be everywhere at home, alike with the Turkish officers and the Italian Mission Sisters, with the Arabs of Sliten and the American archaeologists of Cyrene, with Selim the brigand and the two Miss Jones, whose brother was British Consul at Benghazi. Here there first came into play that special faculty he has of meeting all men and women, of whatsoever race, class, creed, status, opinion or behaviour, without demanding that they shall in any way conform to the standards to which he is accustomed or the faith by which he lives. Today one may say of him, if of any man, that all men are his brothers in their essential humanity; he accepts their varied excellences and their even more varied vices with an equable tolerance which never for a moment weakens the ideal of conduct on which his own life is based.

With women, he has a particularly sympathetic relationship. He likes the society of women; he likes, above all, what a cultured feminine society can give: well-ordered rooms, flowers, soft light, gentle voices, clean napery and

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fine china. He has never desired to possess these things for himself nor made any move to acquire them, for his instinct has warned him that on the journey of such a life as he has wished his to be, a man must travel light and without baggage, but he enjoys them, as he enjoys a cigarette at the end of a long day's work or rest in a beautiful garden after the turmoil of much travelling. But these pleasant things, and the women themselves to whom he shows the most charming and gentle side of his nature, must never threaten to interfere with his life's work, must never be allowed to spin around him the silken threads of love, duty or obligation by which a man may find himself held. At first, perhaps, unconsciously, later certainly in full consciousness, Deedes' was a dedicated life, like that of a priest.

Nearly all women like Deedes. Apart from his gentleness and a delicate courtesy extended to all women, old or young, plain or pretty, grand ladies or humble and unlettered folk, there is a quality in him which makes them all want to take him under a motherly wing, to see that he has had a good meal or changed his wet boots ! His appearance of physical fragility, his ascetic disregard of his own comfort and an extreme refinement of speech and manner, arouse in the other sex an immediate desire to cosset. The ladies of Tripoli were no exception to the rule. When he first arrived he stayed at the house of the British Consul, and the Consul's wife, Mrs. Alvarez, adopted him as her own particular charge, found him a house, engaged his servants, bought his house linen and was not too well pleased that, on an occasion when he was laid up with a bad attack of jaundice, other ladies also left jellies and such-like delicacies at his house. He was genuinely fond of her and they remained fast friends, both while he was at Tripoli and afterwards.

There were few young people in the European society of Tripoli ; most of his acquaintances were on the hither

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side of fifty and he, only twenty-seven, did occasionally feel the lack. On his first Christmas Day he decided to give a children's party. The difficulty was to find the children but eventually five were mustered, three little French girls, one English and one Italian, but there was a great business persuading the French Commandant to allow two young ladies, acting as governesses to the French children, to come to his bachelor house, even under the chaperonage of Mrs. Alvarez. There was even a little difficulty with the latter, for, without consulting her, he asked another young lady to come and help with the party, whereupon Mrs. Alvarez said that it didn't really matter so long as he didn't mind people saying that he was engaged to her! "As that lies lightly on me," says the recalcitrant young man, "I acquiesced."

He also gave a dinner-party or two, but his cook — the one who had threatened to cut the throat of his orderly — produced "a shocker" on one occasion, when also the champagne was flat. He never at any time seems to have managed to serve a meal hot. "I wonder how it's done," says Deedes. "Marry, I suppose. M'm, I think I would sooner live off perpetual ices." From which remark it may be inferred that the few young ladies with whom he played tennis, or rode — efficiently chaperoned — had little to hope for from "*Monsieur le Capitaine, qui porte si bien l'uniforme et a l'air si jeune*".

It was not the small parties, however, but the formal occasions, such as Coronation Day or the Sultan's birthday, when the whole cosmopolitan community turned up in its uniform, which chiefly delighted him and gave scope to his humour. One of the best descriptions is of the celebration of the Sultan's birthday, which happened to fall when he was in Benghazi, staying with Jones, the British Consul, and his two elderly sisters. Here is a diary of the events of the day :

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“9 A.M. The Mutasarrif (*i.e.* Head of the Sanjak of Benghazi) who is a Pasha, held a reception — little Jones in frock-coat and hat.<sup>1</sup> I luckily having only brought Khaki went thus. The band (!) played God save the King à la Turc as we arrived. We then went up to the reception room, congratulated the Pasha on the happy occasion, drank sugar-and-water coloured red, coffee, and smoked a cigarette . . . then we went off to the Union of Liberty and Progress Club and there were received by an Arab, the Mayor, where we drank more sugar-and-water, coloured yellow this time, more coffee, and smoked more cigarettes and paid more compliments. . . . Little Jones — who stands five-nothing-and-one-quarter in his socks — was almost melted out of sight in his frock coat and so we led him gently home. We were accompanied by his two Assistants, one an Italo-Arab and the other a Franco-Maltese and headed by a black Cavass in blue-and-red uniform and gold spectacles, light brown boots and the Sword of Goliath (judging by the size).

“At 2.30 J. and I went to the ‘Derby’. He and I and the Italo-Arab drove — conveyance, hybrid dogcart and buggy, the Italo-Arab and myself sat facing Bucephalus and little Jones sat on a little seat opposite with a rein over each shoulder and the nag having only one side to its mouth and all the pressure being on the other rein, little J. was perpetually crooked. Bucephalus — called Maggie (it was not a female !) — stood about 12 hands high, was 2½ years old and was evidently being ‘launched’ for the first time on that auspicious day. As outrider the black Cavass, dressed as above with the addition of two enormous spurs upside down on his brown boots and permanently lodged for the afternoon in his horse’s flanks, thus securing the necessary speed out of the animal and at the same time his own position in the saddle. The rein (not reins, there

<sup>1</sup> In August on the Barbary Coast !

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was only one on the off side, wisely so, the nag was blind on the near) was attached to a severe bit of rusty iron, which caused the nag to carry his head in the air very high, which came in contact every few minutes with the Cavass' nose and the gold specs. . . . To finish this gentleman off I may say that he had a completely successful ride with the one exception of the one rein breaking on the way home. But this was easily rectified with his handkerchief as substitute.

"The Franco-Maltese assistant came mounted on a tired grey nag of some twenty summers who subsequently ran in a race lasting half an hour which so bucked him up that he came home quite sprightly. The Franco-Maltese, in a straw hat and a pair of white flannel bags, was one of the class '*qui ne monte pas à cheval*'. . . . He held on by the mane and prayed. His prayers were answered. He lives.

"I have no space to describe the races. We sat on either side of H. E. in the Grand Stand (boards and palm-leaves) under a hot sun. Course on desert. Crowded with Arabs and wild-looking Bedouin. I can only describe what I saw. 'They're off'—(this was the start); clouds of dust (this was the race); 'Abdullah or Malamed Bas won' (that was the finish). This happened three times so I conclude there were three races."

To conclude the day, everybody who was anybody went to a dance. "At 9 that evening, little J. in evening dress and 'the sisters' in little black gowns and your humble went to a '*soirée dansante*', as it was described. . . ." 'Twas a very hot night. All the world came—Italians, French, Maltese, Germans—about sixty women somehow turned up and got monstrous hot. The men's dresses were killing: dress suits and flannel shirts—frock-coats—blue suits—uniforms—black ties—white ties—red ties—brown boots—tennis shoes—danced like good 'uns, any step, all steps. Fat Turkish officers in tight

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tunics. We all took part in the Lancers — no one knew it, but no one cared. At 11.30 Supper! The company as one man dashed off on the blowing of a whistle to a refreshment bar and literally looted the contents. Jones got the best part of a bottle of Bass down his collar, which kept coming in instalments out of the bottom of his trousers, to my huge delight.”

It was a far cry from the elegant entertainments of Cork Castle and Government House to the celebrations of the Sultan's birthday, but it is a fair assumption that it was the latter which he enjoyed the most.

A Jewish wedding, to which he was taken by a French friend, lacks the fine cosmopolitan flavour of the Sultan's birthday but is a lively piece of description. It is interesting also, in view of Deedes' later work as Civil Secretary in Palestine, his deep and unwavering support of Zionism and his passionate championship of the Jews against Nazi persecution, to note that at that time he had little understanding of the strength and vitality of the Jewish tradition nor of the part it plays in keeping from submergence a people scattered through every country of the world, persecuted in some and subjected to disabilities in most. Deedes' character and convictions were still in the making in 1910, though already the main outlines were beginning to show through the façade which his breeding, his education and his career had erected round him.

The impression made on him by this Jewish wedding was purely, and not unnaturally, comic.

“All the houses here”, he writes, “. . . have a centre courtyard with rooms all round. In the courtyard in a house in the middle of the town some two to three hundred people, mostly women averaging fourteen stone, dressed in their finest. Temperature somewhere around 90° in the shade, so siroccoish that everything you touch is wringing wet: general atmosphere can therefore be imagined.

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“At one end of the yard were two chairs and over them a canopy arrangement. All round in rows, as in the stalls . . . and on the roof as gallery the spectators were assembled. At the appointed time the Bride was led in. . . . All the Jewesses were dressed in national costume, clothing costing pounds, my friend told me, covered with gold ornaments. . . . The bride and bridegroom took up their position on the aforesaid two chairs and were covered with a silk mantle: what with keeping his mantle over his fez and keeping the fez straight and mopping his brow and drinking some red drink the bridegroom had his hands full.

“Three old scarecrows, rabbis I suppose, then took up a position in front of the couple and caterwauled like three old tom-cats, which refrain was taken up by a crowd of urchins in the roof somewhere (Choir!) and which lasted about fifteen minutes. The audience meanwhile stood on chairs, and that finished the ceremony.

“Cold drinks and sponge cakes following, the effect of the former on the good ladies assembled may be imagined though must not be described. The bridegroom then taking the glass of wine (benediction wine) went into — what I take to be the coal cellar — and broke it and so the ceremony ended.”

He concludes with one of his jests against marriage which had evidently become a stock joke in the family: “. . . My heart bled, as you know it always does, for the poor deluded couple.”

All this represents the lighter side of his life and actually it filled a very small portion of his time or his thoughts. The administrative difficulties of his work were immense and he had many disappointments and failures to face: the defection of one of his best officers; a visit to a post he had thought efficient revealing that no guard was kept and all rifles were dirty; information from headquarters in Smyrna that the plans he had worked out with so much

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labour and after so much travelling could not be realized because there was not sufficient money for anything like the number of men necessary for the posts he had planned. The Gendarmerie in Tripoli never, indeed, exceeded 1500 men, and, with so large and so lawless a country to police, it may well be imagined that the small groups of gendarmes were, as Deedes says, scattered about like ships on an ocean. But a confidential report on his work, presented to the headquarters at Smyrna, and of which a copy was sent to him by Colonel Hawker, testifies to his success, in spite of these handicaps.

“Le capitaine Deedes”, it ran, “est surtout digne d’éloges pour la réussite remarquable de ses efforts à coopérer avec ses camarades turcs dans leur tâche commune — la connaissance intime de la langue turque lui a été très utile et le rend tout à fait indépendant des services d’un interprète.”

Co-operation with his comrades, the Turkish officers, was all the more remarkable in view of the ceaseless and unwelcome energy which he took to their “common task” and to which they, by habit, custom and the climate, were total strangers. The *dolce far niente* atmosphere in which the examination was held has already been described, but the occasions on which Deedes had to combat dilatoriness and apathy were without number; it was no unusual thing for him to arrive unexpectedly at the school in the early morning and find his officers still asleep and the men lounging about. But he took to his task a combination of tact, good-humour and acuity, as the following anecdote illustrates. A certain day was set aside for the formal visits of the Turkish officials to the European residents, and Deedes’ officers informed him that they would do themselves the honour of calling upon him at his house during the morning — in other words, they would all take a day off! — whereupon Deedes thanked them effusively and replied that since he



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would be on the parade-ground at 9 A.M. he could there receive their congratulations.

But they liked him for all his unquiet ways, and when in doubt about any procedure whatsoever used to say: "Ah, well, send for Deedes Bey, *he* will know." Such an occasion was at the starting of the Second Course at the school, in May 1911, when a small revolution threatened: ". . . New officer having been appointed as School Mudir my old officer decamped, nothing would induce him to serve under the other and [he] would send in his resignation — Chaos — New Course starting — officers at logger-heads. Send for Deedes Bey. I get the recalcitrant one and say I fully realise his objections and so on but as a favour would he stay on? To which he says he would stand on his head in the School for a month to please me — gave him a slap on the back and thus surmounted what looked like an ugly difficulty. . . ."

When news reached Tripoli that he was likely to be recalled to Smyrna within a month or two, a round robin, signed by all his officers, was sent to headquarters at Smyrna, begging that he should be left with them. Either their plea or other considerations prevailed, for in March 1911 Deedes notes that he has had a telegram from Colonel Hawker instructing him that he was to remain in Tripoli for the present.

From then until July 1911, when he was due to go on leave—his first leave since Malta and eagerly looked forward to — he continued his visits of inspection to the places with strange and romantic names: Homs, Barca, Tefara, Sliten, Cyrene. He rode past the ruins of Roman civilization, through olive-groves and vineyards, over sandy wastes where wolves prowled; now stopping at the Italian Mission to renew acquaintance with the Mission Sisters, who were great favourites of his, then dropping in to spend a couple of days with the American archaeologists.

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These happened to be up on their diggings when he arrived and were informed by their servants that a Turkish officer had come, but before they met Deedes one of them went into the wash-room and, finding there the visitor's sponge-bag, decided that he must be an Englishman, since no one else would travel that country with a sponge-bag! Even after a night in a filthy khan, spent in a battle with bugs, or in a ruined farm in company with bats and swallows, Deedes, the first up in the morning, would wash and shave before starting on another day in the saddle, often for ten to fourteen hours.

He shared again with his Turkish hosts the "feeding orgies which terrified" him; often went hungry and thirsty, on occasion making his sole meal of the day off a piece of chocolate and a half-loaf given him by a soldier; writing afterwards that he would willingly have "eaten up the crumbs" of the expensive hotel in which his sister was staying "in the lap of luxury, in purple and fine linen, sitting on velvet seats". But he finishes up cheerfully, "It's all right. I at all events know how to enjoy a little comfort when I get it", and often he puts on record his joy, back in Tripoli, at tea, coffee and milk and jam for breakfast.

In the intervals of these journeys he continued to hammer his school into shape, waged the long-drawn battle of the open windows, inspected dinners and rifles impartially, wrote detailed and comprehensive reports to Smyrna, took evening classes, settled all manner of disputes, including one about a slave girl who had been abducted and had taken refuge at the Greek Consulate, and was at once commanding officer, adjutant, clerk, judge, teacher and, in short, in the phrase of the East, father and mother to his gendarmes. He had surely earned his leave.

He had also earned his first Order, the precursor of a long and illustrious line, and this is what he writes when

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it reached him in April 1911: "Lying on my table here is my Merjideh, which arrived in a red velvet box today. It's pretty but a cheap-looking article<sup>1</sup> and about the size of a five-shilling bit so if ever I wear it I shall look as if I had the G.C.B. at least." He did wear it, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Sultan's accession, when he went to pay his official visit to the Vali: ". . . to the delight of the Turks I sported my star which glittered like a sun, it's so big. However, had I worn it in the middle of my back no one here would have smiled."

He wore it again at the celebrations for the coronation of King George V in June 1911, and this is the last gay description of that colourful, mixed, cosmopolitan society of Tripoli which took itself so seriously and in which he so revelled.

"We did our little bit today," he wrote, "and if not inspiring it was at all events amusing. 9.30. Service in the Mission Room. English people 8 or 9. Then we all progressed to the big R.C. church as the Maltese were having a service. Consuls all in their glory hung about with orders, looking (some) like fat beasts at the show with blue and red ribbons on. 'Twas a bad day for the start. Turkish Bath atmosphere. But we made a very fine show in the Church — the Big Wigs occupying seats in front with the Youth and Beauty of the Maltese Colony at a respectful distance behind. Alvarez as Consul General on a sort of throne in the centre of the aisle while on his left the Pasha's . . .<sup>2</sup> in his fez made a delightful Tower-of-Babelly arrangement. The German Consul in a 'William-design' was the delight of the town urchins — white drill — gold and blue — Goliath's sword and a big Life Guards' helmet with huge white plumes. Having a figure like a London cab-horse he looked too lovely for words. Another Consul looked just like a huge man-of-war dressed up.

<sup>1</sup> It is, very pretty.

<sup>2</sup> Word illegible.

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Review as he sailed — or steamed — up the aisle with four *rows* of orders. He got towed into dock by a Maltese in great style. We all after repaired to H.M. Consulate where Madame A. received the various Ironclads and small craft. Walking up the steps my hand kept going to my head involuntarily and I then discovered that the noise produced by a barrel organ, a violin and a guitar was ‘God Save the King’ . . . at this moment — time 3 P.M. 90° in the shade — about 25 Maltese urchins surrounded by a crowd of hot mothers and well-dined poppas are calling on Providence to Save the King (about whom they’re evidently concerned) at intervals of five minutes. . . .”

He never returned to Tripoli after he went on leave in July, for whilst he was still in England Italy declared war on Turkey, on September 30th, and landed troops in Tripoli. That chapter, with its zest, its colour, its hardships, its tale of difficulties and the manner in which they were overcome, was closed. But it had given him a valuable, and valued experience; it had taught him to know his own powers and to have confidence in himself; it had allowed the spring of his remarkable energies at last to uncoil and carried him the first stage along the path of that career in which he was to make so notable a mark before he turned his back on it in the quest for some spiritual perfection, defying analysis, which absorbs him.

How happy he was in these months every line that he writes bears witness, but in one of his last letters before leaving for home he sums up in a short sentence all that this episode had meant to him: “. . . Certainly never have I passed, nor am likely to, a happier year in my life, and with this I will close”.

## Chapter Six

IT was perhaps as well that Deedes was on leave in the late summer of 1911 for, as he himself says, it would have been very difficult for him, a young man enthusiastic about the Gendarmerie he had trained and organized, not to throw in his lot with theirs when the Italians invaded Tripoli. And that would have led to many complications, since he was an officer in His Britannic Majesty's forces. But his gendarmes—"a highly efficient force of 1500, under a young officer of the King's Royal Rifles"<sup>1</sup>—acquitted themselves well, as did also the soldiers of the Regular Army, and this fighting quality, combined with the difficulties of the terrain, gave the Italians a task which they did not succeed in accomplishing until the pressure of internal dissension and the war with Bulgaria and Serbia forced the Turkish Government to make peace with Italy and cede to them Tripoli.

But that was a year later, and in the meantime Deedes had been sent to Smyrna on his return from leave.

In Smyrna conditions were totally different from those in Tripoli. He was no longer so independent in his work, because Smyrna was the headquarters of the Gendarmerie and he worked more directly under the eye of the senior officers. Then the city itself was large, rich and commercially of the highest importance since it was the chief port of the Turkish Empire, carrying on a very large export trade, and with a big population of wealthy merchants and

<sup>1</sup> *Morning Post*, October 2nd, 1911.

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bankers of many different nationalities, Dutch, Italian, French, American and British, though the Greek element predominated. Much indeed of the agricultural produce from the interior of Anatolia passed through Greek hands for export. The social life of Smyrna therefore was very different from that of Tripoli and one reads in Deedes' letters of golf competitions, dinner-parties, gatherings formal and informal, visits to a cinema, a German play, a café — known as the *Hig-Lif*, i.e. High Life — and other such gaieties. But because the society was so much more numerous and, though cosmopolitan, so much more conventional one does not learn to know its members through Deedes' letters, as one learns to know the Alvarez and little J. and his sisters and Mehmet Bey and Miss M., who sulked and had a fit of the tantrums because he asked Miss W. and Miss T. to go for a moonlight ride. And though he had many strange adventures and travelled among lawless and primitive people in the hinterlands of Anatolia there are no thumb-nail portraits of individuals such as those of Ahmed Bey, President of the Board of Examiners, of the Franco-Maltese who rode in the races, of the German Consul and the Arab Marabut, father of seven sons, which enliven page after page of the letters of 1910 and 1911. The interest of the letters of this period lies in the picture they give of a country so wild and undeveloped and of a peasant population so lawless, primitive and illiterate, out of which the genius of one man shaped the New Turkey.

The country southward from Smyrna towards Antalya, and eastward towards Konya and Ankara, was agricultural, save in the mountainous districts, and potentially of great richness, but badly farmed save where it was in the hands of foreign settlers. The villages were squalid, tumble-down and filthy beyond measure, and though there was a system of roads they were uniformly bad and in some places unusable. There was a railway line from Smyrna to Konya,

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but once off the main route transportation was by horse-drawn carriage or on horseback; no motor car had ever been seen in that interior. How universal was brigandage may be inferred from the fact that everywhere, even within a short distance of Smyrna, the richer people went about armed. It is safe to say that Deedes did not, save for a sword more ornamental than useful, bought for a few shillings in a bazaar in Stamboul. He has never been able to treat the matter of his personal safety with sufficient seriousness to carry arms, and even during the South African War was so forgetful as to leave his revolver behind in a hotel bedroom when he had been on leave in a small town to visit his brother. On another occasion too, when he had a long solitary ride through country in which a Boer patrol might appear at any moment, he did remember to take his revolver only to find, as he records rather sheepishly, that he had left his ammunition behind.

It was not the brigands that disturbed him on his tours of inspection, but the dirt. He had learnt to deal with the bug-infested khans of Tripoli but it was a hot country and people ate and lived out of doors, 'whereas in Anatolia people huddled together in a universal squalor that nothing could redeem. "I don't particularly enjoy," says he, "especially for thirty-two days on end, being more or less dirty." On his first tour in the Konya district, for instance, he writes from Sedi Sheker, near Isbarta, "guests and horses were entertained in the same building, a small mud hut with a broken-down wall dividing us from the horses. Smell and so on to suit of course. . . ." The nature of the entertainment may be gathered from the menu: ". . . a dish that gave me the impression that a lot of eggs had been hurriedly hustled into a saucepan and hurriedly hustled out, and finally produced before us all out of breath don't you know. Besides that a dish of dry cheese and a dish of — well, we will say curds! flavoured with stable and lamp-

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oil." And on the same trip, not far from the lake of Beysehir, he writes: "We slept in as filthy a Konag as can be imagined. Below us the prison and there being wide chinks in the floor, though the prisoners were below we were regaled with certain odours which the pen is but a slender reed wherewith to describe. However, we did sleep and woke the worse."

The discomfort of these conditions was increased by the inclemency of the weather. To most of us the name Anatolia calls up a vision of a sunny land, bordering on the Mediterranean, with an air perpetually balmy above groves of fig and olive and scented with roses and grape-vines. Certainly the summers are extremely hot, but inland the winter is as severe as anywhere in Central Europe — in early November, for instance, Deedes wrote that though the trees had not yet shed their leaves and were hardly tinted, he was so cold that he could hardly hold his pen. Several times on this same trip he recounts that he has had to get out of the carriage and run to warm himself; and this was in the autumn and he was only a short distance inland. In the interior, eastwards, the snow lies for many months and the land is wolf-haunted; the high Anatolian plateau, round Erzincan, the scene of the earthquake of 1939, is as cold as the Arctic, swept by the bitter winds that stream, unhindered, from Tibet. There the peasants in the outlying districts away from the towns dig their houses in the side of the hills and, when winter comes, go in with their families and their flocks and herds and do not come out till the spring. The Turkish Ambassador recently told Deedes that it would be possible to ride over a whole village when it was under snow and not know it was there, save for slight undulations in the ground.

To that district, of course, Deedes never went in mid-winter; it was impossible to penetrate that snowbound fastness, but he did go, in August 1913, to the westward



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edge and crossed the Anti-Taurus mountains, finding it, even in mid-summer, bitterly cold in the early mornings.

Of the lawlessness of the country evidences may be found in almost every section of this diary and are all the more striking because of the gay cosmopolitan life of Smyrna, Mitylene and a few places on the littoral. It was not alone here, as in Tripoli, a question of the waylaying of a peasant and his camel, the ambushing of a solitary soldier or the terrorizing of a village, though all these crimes were common enough, but brigandage had acquired the status of a profession, for there were rich merchants and farmers to be held to ransom. How tempting such booty could be appears from the story of van Hempster, the Dutch owner of a very large farm. A few years before Deedes' arrival he had been abducted by brigands from his own land, and his brother-in-law had been forced to pay £6000 for his release. From that time a *karakol*, or gendarme post, had been permanently stationed on his farm, and Deedes was sent up there in January 1912 because a letter was left on the window-sill one night threatening van Hempster with murder if he did not again pay *danegeld*. This was at Burnabat, within a very short distance of Smyrna.

"I have come up", writes Deedes, "really to see how things are and especially to look into the Gendarmerie. I left the Point at 12 noon and got to this station at 1 P.M. where the brother van Hempster met me in his trap with two mounted gendarmes as he can't go about unaccompanied. We had thirty-five minutes' drive and whenever we saw anyone going through what is, I must own, a very wild bit of country van H. immediately put his hand on his revolver . . . all the rich people go about fully armed always, I think rather absurd in some cases. . . ."

The head of the band which was then operating in this neighbourhood was one Sauri, who was "wanted" by the

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Government for murder in connection with a blood feud, as well as for other crimes. He had been an officer of the Gendarmerie but had taken to brigandage, doubtless as more lucrative, and there is a certain Robin Hood flavour about one of his exploits which Deedes recounts. He had abducted a young man and demanded £1000 ransom, but when the wretched father, having scraped together the money, presented himself at the place of assignation Sauri returned £400 of it, saying he was sorry to have put his victim to so much trouble in collecting £1000, but he had been misinformed by his men, who represented the family as wealthier than it was. Unfortunately Deedes does not say whether this so-gentlemanly brigand avoided capture, but one cannot suppress a sneaking hope that he did.

In this country, haunted by robbers and outlaws as was Europe in the Dark Ages, justice was dealt with a heavy hand. At one of the places at which Deedes and his Turkish companion called, on his very first trip, the Kaymakam overcame the opposition of the village to the establishment of a *karakol* by the following speech: "With people like you only two things are possible. One, schools in which to educate you to see the necessity of law and order . . . the other is the stick. Now, schools take fifteen years to produce a man such as I want; the stick is a matter of five minutes. . . ."

The argument prevailed and the villagers agreed to erect a building to house a gendarme post, but the threat was no idle one and even Deedes himself was once driven to sanction the use of the *bastinado*. On one of his inspections he arrived at a village where a murder had been committed the previous night. Since it was a blood feud murder there was strong presumptive evidence that the village would know who the murderer was, and Deedes summoned the elders to deliver him up, but they professed complete ignorance of his identity. The following night

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another murder was committed, nearly on the same spot, and Deedes' gendarmes came to him and said that if they were to bastinado the elders of the village the name of the murderer would be forthcoming.

"I am afraid I could not sanction that," said Deedes. But next night a third murder was committed, whereupon Deedes ordered the bastinado and the murderer was produced forthwith.

It is strange, to those who know Deedes and the swift manifestations of his sympathy, to think of him permitting the use of such punishment, though in the interests of justice. But he himself once explained such contradictions in men's actions by saying, when speaking of the Great War, that it seemed to him that men live at different levels of their personality, according to the demands of their environment.

During this first year in Smyrna, as in Tripoli, he himself did not live at his own deeper levels; there was so much to do, so much to see, a constant demand on the qualities of physical endurance, courage and resource. But, as Browning says in one of his letters, behind the dark walls of the lighthouse the lamp is fed and trimmed, though only at the appointed time and revolution does a beam strike out across the dark sea. In these years of Deedes' life the lamp within was fed but the beams are few; a phrase scattered here or there in the account of his numerous activities and adventures gives a brief glimpse: a wistful exclamation called out by the beauty of the spring near Sardis that it was almost *too* lovely and he wanted someone to talk to — he, who had so many friends and acquaintances without number — a little account of a morning when he went walking alone, ". . . is there anything nicer than walking alone? . . ." and discussed many things with himself and "arrived at as many conclusions". One feels that Deedes then, as now, was a lonely man. All mankind was his

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brother and half the world his friend, but the profound and quiet intimacy with another human soul, the accord with another personality which leaves each free and integral yet enriched by the ties of perfect understanding, was a gift denied to him, though it has been given to lesser men than he. Perhaps the phenomenal activity, physical and intellectual, which at all times distinguishes him is not unrelated to that hollowness at the heart of a creature essentially lonely. He never rests; there is nothing to rest for; only life to be filled with its insistent duties till death brings release to the tired and faithful servant.

In these youthful years he could not know these things about himself; he was still trying to fit himself to the traditions of his country, class and time; he was ambitious to make a career and very busy doing so, though at rare moments perhaps he looked inwards and wondered where the true value of life might lie, as when he writes: ". . . This life does so suit me in some ways altho' it's a curious thing in other ways I hate being away out of the middle of things. In fact I have come to the certain conclusion that my character is full of inconsistencies and opposites. . . ."

He managed to read a great deal at this time, perhaps with the desire still at the back of his mind one day to enter Parliament, and one comes across notes in his letters on Bryce's *History of the American Commonwealth*, Curzon's book on India, the Webbs' monumental work on the *Prevention of Destitution* and such solid reading matter. His attention was turning ever more earnestly to the consideration of the intricate and unhappy problem of poverty in rich industrial countries like that of England, led thereto by his brother, who was now finding uneasily that the fair surface of the society to which he belonged hid many purulent sores. In Wyndham he enlisted an enthusiastic companion in this mental quest, and set his feet upon the road which he has

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travelled in the latter part of his life. It is curious to meet the names of books dealing with the problems of a so-different society in the midst of stories of brigands, of descriptions of people living as they lived in England in the eleventh century, and of meetings with men whose experiences might well have been those of Europe in the time of the Crusades.

Sitting in a khan near Üsküg one day "a poor devil clothed in rags came in, who said he had come from Afghanistan and was on his way to Mecca doing a pilgrimage. He was nearly at his last gasp and we fed him with the remainder of our lunch which he devoured ravenously . . ."; and again at Menemem: ". . . while eating, a small boy, very wretched-looking, came in and was given some food. I was told to talk English to him and indeed it turned out that he knew English, French, Italian, Russian, Arabic, Turkish. Aged fifteen. Very sharp and clever. A Cretan Moslem by race." Deedes "adopted" this boy, who was an orphan and without relatives, one of many thousands whose families had been dispersed, massacred or had died of want or sickness during the war with Bulgaria and Serbia. But how he came there, in what manner he subsisted and where he came to acquire his amazing polyglot facility by the age of fifteen would have made a picaresque novel of the first order if Deedes had ever thought to ask him his adventures and jot them down. But he did not; he contented himself with taking the boy with him, having him cleaned and properly dressed, and placing him, at his own expense, in the Orphans' Arts School in Smyrna, though, as he remarks, ". . . to see this little black child, all in rags, talking away to me in French . . . was very strange".

And then, such are the contrasts of this existence, another entry in these diary-letters will tell of a game of golf at Burnabat (where, perhaps needless to say, there was a large English colony!) and of how Deedes, partnered

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by "Dodo", aged seventeen, very pretty, "who was as good as most little girls", won the competition. And of how he went shooting woodcock, though rather apologetically, for it was Sunday, and in England one does not shoot on Sundays. But the European colony thought that his going "would sort of create a comforting feeling" in that brigandish country and so "we walked over dogs while the gendarmes and other mounted varlets rode through the woods in line with us, the most dangerous game (for them) I ever played at as you never knew where anyone was or wasn't. However, game being scarce, only four cock got shot and no beaters. . . ."

In quite a number of places he speaks of the work he has undertaken for the Agricultural journal, working with Mrs. van Lennep, wife of one of the wealthy Dutch farmers, who wrote the articles to be published in French, while he undertook no less a task than translating into Turkish an article on the diseases of cotton — and however well one might know Turkish it was no light matter to find the equivalent of the scientific terms to describe the habits and ravages of phyloxera.

So went these active stirring months, with a great deal of hard work, discomfort and some personal danger, a fair amount of fun and social intercourse with every brand of man: rich pashas, Greek merchants, Turkish officers, Archimandrites, Dutch farmers, golf-playing Englishmen and wanderers like the pilgrim to Mecca.

Meanwhile, the political scene darkened. The Italian Navy, having occupied the south-eastern islands of the Archipelago, bombarded Beyrut and was daily expected to arrive off Smyrna. What resistance could have there been offered is at least dubious, in the light of Deedes' remark that the only ship of which the Turkish fleet consisted could not be moved from her moorings lest she should sink. However, the English-speaking captain —

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whose English vocabulary was almost entirely represented by the word "damn"—assured Deedes that if the damn Italians came he had damn well orders to sink the damn ship, which, as Deedes says, filled him with a feeling of security.

But the Italians were not the only foe with whom Turkey had to deal. In the autumn of 1911, as soon as war had broken out, the Albanians revolted against the Turkish misgovernment from which they had long suffered, the Turkish Cabinet resigned and the Committee of Union and Progress, which came into power, had to concede the Albanian demand for autonomy, covering four vilayets of Macedonia. The remaining Balkan states, however, seized the opportunity to strike at a weakened Turkey and demanded that the whole of European Turkey, where the cruel treatment of the Christian minorities over a long series of years had kept rebellion perpetually aflame, should be partitioned into four spheres of influence: Bulgarian, Serbian, Greek and Montenegrin respectively. Russia and Austria, jealous of each other's power in the Balkans, watched uneasily, but the moment for intervention had not come. On October 9th, 1912, Montenegro formally declared war; on October 13th the other Balkan Allies presented their demand for autonomy in Macedonia, and on October 17th Turkey declared war on Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece.

Disaster followed quickly for the Turks. On October 19th the Serbs defeated them at Kumanovo, on the road to Üsküg; the Greeks invaded them and marched towards Salonika, long the goal of their ambitions, and the Bulgarian armies invested Adrianople and inflicted a terrible defeat at Kirkkilise, only about a hundred miles north of Constantinople, on October 24th, and again at Lüleburgaz, south of Kirkkilise, on November 1st. The Turkish armies retreated on Constantinople, though in good order, and

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took up their position on the fortified lines of Çatalca, twenty-five miles north of the city. But though the army, in spite of its punishment, was still unbroken, something like panic invaded Constantinople, not excepting the European section, and the waves of refugees who poured into the city, fleeing before the Bulgarian armies, added to the terror and confusion. They brought with them their sick and wounded, expectant mothers, children, old people, and very soon every kind of infectious disease manifested itself, as was to be expected in a vast agglomeration of homeless people, half starved, under-clad, herding together without sanitary precautions or medical supervision. Most dread of all, cholera appeared. What such an epidemic could mean in that ancient and crowded city can hardly be imagined, but it travelled the country with the rapidity and deadliness of the Black Death, infected the army and threatened to devastate all Turkey. A few Europeans struggled to organize some medical and relief services; Hoffmann Philip, of the American Embassy, Maurice Baring, Dr. Frew, a minister of the Church of Scotland, and a Swiss hospital nurse went out to San Stefano and took possession of an empty school. Lady Lowther, wife of the British Ambassador, formed a committee to give food and blankets to the destitute, and Doughty-Wylie, who had already become well known for his relief work after the massacres of Adana, came out with his wife in charge of a Red Cross hospital unit.

Deedes and Hawker were sent to Constantinople to help the Doughty-Wylies, who had established a base hospital in the museum at Stamboul but were anxious to have a first-aid station nearer the front, at Çekmece, on an inlet of the sea near San Stefano, and if possible at Hadimköy also, the headquarters of the Turkish Army. Some idea of the conditions with which they had to deal may be gathered from the rough notes which Deedes jotted down



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and sent home, though even then he says often that words cannot describe the scenes of horror. At San Stefano there were thousands of cholera patients lying unattended and "the open ground at Seraglio Point was strewn with dying soldiers who had been carried there from the railway station and left to die unattended".<sup>1</sup> Hawker, who had been trying to get back to Smyrna on a Messageries Maritimes boat, told Deedes that he "had seen an awful sight. Boat-loads of men who had had no drink for 24 hours. All cholera cases in the last stage . . . the Messageries sent these soldiers water in a sling from the boat; they fought like animals." After the battle of November 18th, Deedes and his party, on their way up to their advanced hospital at Alibeyçiftlik, saw rows of dead men laid out on the station and a train of wounded and sick coming back from the front, crowded inside and out, with men even tied to the footplates, many of whom had died on the way down. And on the following day, when he and Doughty-Wylie rode into Hadinköy, the Turkish headquarters, they saw a huge mound of dead in the midst of the village and the Turks bringing in from the surrounding district other dead, and men not dead but dying, and throwing them on to this grisly pile. Whether thrown there or left to lie, their fate was alike terrible, for it was winter and the wolves, drawn by the smell of slaughter, were coming down from the Forest of Belgrade, to add the last touch of horror in this overwhelming desolation.

One sometimes wonders how, in such conditions, men have the courage to attempt anything with the inadequate means at their disposal. These small and ardent groups of individuals could not hope to stem the tide of death, to succour more than a proportion of the suffering, and yet, because they persisted, the spirit of hopelessness which had invaded the Turks gave way to endeavour, they shook off

<sup>1</sup> Robert Graves, *Storm Centres of the Near East*.

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their apathy and themselves took in hand some organization for their sick and wounded.

But the difficulties which confronted Doughty-Wylie's party at the outset were very great. First, it was necessary to isolate cholera cases from wounded, and since San Stefano had been turned into a cholera camp, and nominally isolated by a cordon of soldiers — though, as Deedes says, in actuality he walked right through it and was challenged by no one — they decided to establish their hospital base in a farmhouse at the head of the lake south of Çatalca, to bring the wounded down in small barges, towed by a launch, tranship them on stretchers and send them round to Constantinople by sea. They were told the scheme was impracticable, that the lake was not navigable and that there was a silted channel between the lake and the arm of the sea which would make it impossible to get a launch on to the lake, but they persisted, discovered that the lake was “deep enough to sink a Dreadnought”, and arranged with the Turkish naval officers to get the tug carried bodily over the silted part of the channel.

On November 14th they moved out to their hospital, after such a further series of misfortunes and dangers as might have wrecked the scheme with less determined men.

“Yesterday, Friday,” writes Deedes, “had a very busy day making the final arrangements for coming out. . . . Instead of meeting with facilities, met with difficulties everywhere. . . . Saw Nazif Pasha, our Gendarmerie Head, and got gendarmes. Saw Enim Pasha and got leave to come here. Saw the Navy to arrange about the launch for the Lake and the tug for the sea, to bring us here. . . . Saw Sir Richard Crawford to obtain leave to load up at his pier in the morning. At 5 o'clock when I returned to the hospital met with the first and very serious ‘contretemps’. Found in our absence all the Red Cross baggage had been taken

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down last night . . . to the wrong pier. But what pier? Why, the pier which had been cordoned off to allow all the Cholera soldiers who are coming back from Constantinople (if you please! instead of . . . to San Stefano which had been made the Cholera camp!). This was indeed a serious thing, as apart from the danger of all our stores being contaminated, we had more or less guaranteed to the authorities to have nothing to do with cholera.

“ . . . Well, I went down and I can't describe the sight. A long cordon of soldiers with fixed bayonets along the road leading to the Pier. Great difficulty in getting through, and rightly, as I was breaking the cordon. Then a couple of battalions of soldiers of whom I am not exaggerating when I say that 60% were dying or dead or going to be dying! No officers. Rows of stretchers carrying men at the last gasp. . . . Groans all round. Pitch dark, couldn't see where one was walking, falling over dead or dying. Risk you know!

“ Our Red Cross fellows, coats off, carrying stretchers and doing fine work. Well, I found the stores and put a guard on. I then went back to Hospital. Had my boots and gaiters syringed with disinfectant.

“ Today . . . got up at 6 A.M. Came over to the Hospital. We then had to get down to the Customs Pier with our bedding and so on and put it on the lighter. . . . All the streets blocked with emigrants. After an hour's fighting I got everyone on board and we pushed off to the Seraglio Point, *i.e.* the Customs Pier. Then to my horror I saw the whole place crammed with soldiers, all cholera men who had been sent down from the Front . . . these men, who looked more like animals than men, were many of them in a very bad way, several dead, no food, no water, no officers! To my horror they were all *over* our stores, and had been lying on them all night. . . . Well, we drew up to the landing stage and then, I had scarcely time to climb

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out of the tug, when, to my horror, I saw the tug we were pulling — with all our bedding for sick, our kit, my kit.— and which had drawn up at the landing stage, suddenly filled with soldiers ! Seeing us, and looking on us as come to save them, they had rushed and fought their way on to our tug. In a moment all our bedding, kits, etc. were in a hopeless state and all frightfully infected, of course, because the state of the ground in a Cholera camp, and such a cholera camp as this, you can imagine. At that moment I really *did* feel ‘If we don’t all get cholera now ——!’ One of the doctors said ‘God help us!’ Well, out I jumped, rushed sword in hand and with the help of the gendarmes I had with me drove the men out. . . . We washed our hands and feet in the sea, and then on the tug on the way, got sprayed with disinfectant. . . .

“At 12 we arrived at Küçük Çekmece. They had given up expecting us and had sent away the boats for the Lake and the carriages. . . . Well, the next six hours, 12 noon to 6, I never worked harder. . . . I whipped up boats, I found carts, I shouted, ran, and generally had one of the most tiring days of my life. . . . We got in at 7. Found very nice rooms for ourselves and men. This is a large farm. We have an old barn of three stories which we mean to use for the wounded, if we have any ; then there is a new wooden building, very clean, which we officers are using. . . . We have just had a splendid dinner off hot Oxo, bully beef, marmalade, bread and cocoa.

“And so ends five of the hardest days’ work I’ve had for some time . . . and really, this last day, being as we all have in as much danger as one could well wish for. I trust we none of us got infected. After all, we are in God’s hands and there’s no more to say.”

Strange to say, none of the party was infected and they all came scatheless through the other dangers which beset them.

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Two days later Deedes and Doughty-Wylie went up to the front and Deedes writes :

“I hope I never have to see such sights as I saw today again. . . . We came at 12 o'clock to Hadimköy, the Headquarters of the Army. It's quite impossible to describe what I saw. . . . Enough to say we rode through a heap of dead and dying, and men in the direst straits a man could be. The smell was awful. We spoke to the doctors who, gallant fellows, were, you can imagine, almost in despair. We then moved on along a road now lined with dead, and lines of carts and stretchers and horses bringing in dead and dying to the forts. We were now in the Artillery line of forts. . . . We could see the Bulgarian artillery plainly, and their shells bursting over our guns. . . . There was now heavy infantry firing too. . . . After an hour Doughty and I were conducted into the train to see Nazim Pasha. I spoke in Turkish and explained our object, viz. to acquaint H.E. of our arrival at the Çiftlikbey and to ask him to inform all concerned where to send the wounded. H.E. was very nice and most grateful ; gave me a horse, which I badly wanted, also ten gendarmes to guard our camp.<sup>1</sup> We then left and on the way picked up several wounded and brought them in. Doughty rode on to acquaint those here of our coming in. I was left with the wounded, the only one who knew the road ! Pitch dark and raining. Thank God, though I lost it once, I got in safe at 6, which Providence alone is responsible for.”

The Turks had fought with extraordinary courage throughout the whole of this tale of defeat, and now, after the appearance of the little group of Europeans, with their capacity for organization and their indomitable will, the Turkish officers took heart to combat the disorganization of sickness and suffering. The next time Deedes went to Hadimköy he saw no such spectacle as the monstrous heap

<sup>1</sup> Nazim Pasha was afterwards assassinated by Enver.

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of dead and dying which was his first sight of Turkish headquarters ; the dead had been buried, the wounded removed, the village had been cleansed and a huge fire had been lighted in the middle of it to burn the indescribable filth of befouled and blood-stained litter. Men were even to be seen laughing and joking, though one wonders that those who had seen what Deedes has described could ever laugh again until time had blurred the image. The cholera was abating, since its very virulence created its own immunity, and the Turkish Army was still holding the Bulgarians in check. Indeed, the cholera which had scourged the Turks became their weapon against their enemies, for it spread to the Bulgarian Army and induced their leaders to agree to an armistice. This was signed between the Turks and the Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbs on December 2nd, without the Çatalca lines ever having been forced or Constantinople invested.

Deedes meanwhile had been summoned back to Smyrna, where there was great uneasiness at the possibility of risings, riots and reprisals, while reports were coming in of large-scale massacres at Adana. He went with reluctance, having seen much and gained much experience. His remarkable knowledge of Turkish had stood him, and all those with whom he worked, in good stead ; it had enabled him to make direct and intimate contact with Turkish officers, officials and the suffering men themselves, and it must have done much to bring comfort and courage to the victims of the horrible scenes which he describes. It, and the other qualities which he so abundantly manifested in this crisis, made him a marked man in European and Turkish official circles, and it seemed likely, if he decided to remain in the Near East, that a distinguished career was before him. But perhaps the chief fruit of this experience was within himself, in the revelation of the depth and intensity of human suffering and the recognition of what had previously been an

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obscure impulse, that in devotion to its relief he might find work which to him was really worth while. He sums it up in one sentence in a letter to his mother, "It's not money that's wanted, it's personal service and courage", and though this ideal was to be at times obscured, it was never lost, and has in the long run shaped his life to the pattern by which, when all is over, it will be known and judged.

## *Chapter Seven*

BACK in Smyrna, he did not want for work. The whole social and economic fabric of Turkey was disrupted by the war, and vast hordes of people were fleeing from their villages, their lands and their homes. Wave after wave of refugees poured into Smyrna from the hinterlands of Anatolia, where there was a large Greek population which, emboldened by the presence of Greek warships off the island of Chios, might fall upon the Turkish people in their midst, above all now that the greater number of men of military age had been called away. In addition, thousands of those who had fled before the Bulgarian armies when they drove down towards Çatalca, had managed to cross the narrow straits and swelled the wandering and desolate population of Anatolia. It was bitter winter weather and they were without food, without adequate clothing, without property save what they had hastily seized before their flight; most often cherished but valueless objects which could neither warm nor nourish them.

Such a problem, the blind rush of a whole countryside in a state of bewilderment and panic, would tax the resources of the most highly organized Government; with the Turkish Government, beaten on all fronts, disrupted by internal dissensions and never, under the old Ottoman Empire,<sup>1</sup> possessing a personnel trained to organization,

<sup>1</sup> The handling of the problem created by the Erzincan earthquake in 1939 was, according to Deedes, who was sent out by the Anglo-Turkish Relief Committee, a model of efficiency, and nothing could more clearly demonstrate the difference between the old Turkey and the new.



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the confusion may be imagined. Fortunately for the Turks they had in her midst at that time a small number of quite remarkable Europeans with the courage and the energy to attempt the cleansing of this pitiful Augean stable. Among them was Deedes. Without waiting for a commission he set to work with the matter of first urgency, giving out food tickets and blankets to the refugees as they arrived — 1500 in a batch sometimes — and were huddled in indescribable misery and squalor in the mosques of the city. The head of the Smyrna Refugee Committee, one Nezif Pasha, did indeed enter a complaint that a Gendarmerie officer should be doing such work, but Deedes, though momentarily hurt, was undeterred. The matter was too urgent for such considerations.

“ . . . We have a crisis”, he writes on January 11th, 1913, “ in that our blankets are finished and our money too. . . . Did you see the pitiable state of the women and children and men in this weather you would know what this means — bitterly cold and *no* covering. I am followed now all over Smyrna by women, daily, after blanket distribution. I have to turn away a large number. Some say they have come four or five days running and not got anything owing to the crush. They beg and beseech me — it’s impossible to know what to do — one ends by giving away a lot of money — I mean oneself, for our Committee, faring badly, say : Give no money.”

Returning to the Consulate after such a walk he would find people still awaiting him — “ six women at the front and twenty at the back gate and three poor young creatures at the Club, all destitute, all begging”. Again his hand in his pocket ; he was not the man to say “ No ” — such persistence with such poverty, who can refuse, he says ? In this strange disorganized world all the old taboos vanished and he, an Englishman, who before would have been regarded with the utmost suspicion if he had spoken

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to a Turkish woman, or even looked at her, now found himself surrounded by them, at the Consulate, in the street, even in the club where he lodged. They crowded round him, calling him the pretty endearing names they use for cajolery — my dear, my lamb, my child — kissing his feet, his shoulder or the back of his head as he sat among them with his pencil and paper, in the bitter cold of the winter mornings, repeating his formula: "Name? How many small children? How many big? What mosque are you in? Next please."

But his heart was warm within him; the deep springs were touched and his charity flowed out to these poor people. By instinct, though neither by upbringing nor by circumstance, he belongs to that order of men who find their fullest self-expression in self-abnegation, who by surrendering all, wealth, position, home, family, even life itself, find a richness of existence denied to those of us who follow the more trodden way. He would have been happiest if he had lived in one of the great ages of Christian faith and could, as a follower of St. Francis, have espoused Poverty as his bride, or if he could, like Father Damien in later times, have shut himself into the narrow purgatory of a leper colony and there found himself king of the infinite spaces of heaven.

It was not to be; many things deterred him, not least loyalty and love and the clamorous events of the years in which his manhood was passed, which have conscripted all the energy and intelligence of a man with such a sense of duty as he. But there was a moment in 1913 when he saw the path he wished to tread and wrote thus to his mother: "I have now come to the conclusion, if indeed I did not know it before, that even if it doesn't form a career and even if it doesn't offer — which it would — any chance of making a name (here on earth), that I can conceive of *no* work I would more willingly throw myself into than charity

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organization work. To begin with, the *personal* element is to me engrossing — secondly, it's work that wants organizing and can't be done by anyone — and thirdly, it's *the* work, the field we ought all to labour in. It would be selfishness on my part to do it, I love it so, and the people too know that and get to love one."

There is in that letter much of Deedes' inner history and a forecast of his future. There is the conviction that the relief of suffering is the field in which we all should labour ; there is his belief, which today is a primary article of his creed, that in the personal element, in the relation of man to man, lies the crux of the human problem, and there is that queer interpolation of the word "career". In such a context the word seems out of place, inconsistent, but it throws a great deal of light on his personal background. He was a brilliant young man — everyone said so — and he was expected to make a brilliant career and thereby to compensate those he loved for many disappointments and many sacrifices ; he knew the heartaches and the frustrations at home, and then, as always, it was difficult for him to oppose his own desires to the wishes of those who loved him. Moreover, he was only thirty, and with that confusion and inconsistency of purpose which it takes most of us so long to escape from, he probably *did* want to make a career. One may set beside that letter of January 1913 one written six months later, in June, when his name had been put forward for a possible appointment as one of the advisers to a Land Settlement Scheme for Refugees in the Ottoman Empire.

"I live in suspense", he writes ; "I have become so obsessed with the idea that I am going to get something that I await every mail as if it were going to bring me that, but yet I know I can't be going to get the thing I want, *i.e.* one of the six advisers. It's impossible, and not reasonable to expect it because they will of course be *experts* and much

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older men, and *yet* if I don't get some job I shall be very disappointed. . . .

"A fever will come from the thirst after drink and other evils ; I fancy the thirst after success comes but very little behind."

In the half-year between those two letters he had, as he says modestly enough, "been a little bit to the fore". He had started a scheme for employing refugees in their own industries, for he was quickly aware that the bread-and-blankets form of relief was merely an emergency measure, to be supplemented by constructive work as soon as possible. He was particularly keen on making use of the skill of the women in hand weaving and he bought and set up fifteen looms out of his private pocket, while the municipality of Bursa paid for thirty more and the American Refugee Committee for yet another ten. There was at the same time a scheme for a large-scale land settlement of refugees at Bursa, where there was abundance of unoccupied land, on which he worked hard, though unofficially, drawing up projects for presentation to the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Finance, suggesting that the Agricultural banks should be called on to lend half the cost of settlement, which was estimated at £60 a family. Since there were hundreds of thousands of refugees to be settled in the vilayet of Bursa alone, even £60 a family would amount to a formidable sum and it is doubtful whether the Turkish Treasury, with the best will in the world, could have found anything like the sum necessary, after a devastating war.

As always, even where human suffering and human need are involved, things did not go without friction ; the Turkish officials were jealous of the interference of foreign voluntary organizations and a Refugee Commission was formally appointed from Constantinople, with salaried officials, who, as Deedes remarks, inaugurated their reign

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by spending in one month what the voluntary committee had spent in three and by giving away money instead of food.

So he went to Constantinople, to put before the Minister of the Interior, Hacı Adil Bey, a report on the refugee problem and to discuss the possibilities of land settlement. While there he met the man who was not only to set an indelible mark on the history of his own people, transforming a backward, primitive and disorganized nation, broken by wars and revolutions, into a compact and efficient modern state, but was, among the personalities which have emerged from the chaos of the World War, in some ways the most remarkable. This was Mustafa Kemal, “. . . a young fellow”, writes Deedes, “. . . all-powerful at the *coup d'état* and in full power now”. Mustafa Kemal was at that time Commandant of Constantinople and a member of that Party of Union and Progress which, after the armistice with the Balkan States which had been forced on Turkey, seized the reins of government in January 1913, when Enver Pasha and Talaat invaded the Council Chamber and Enver with his own hand killed Nazım Pasha, the Commander of the Turkish Army at Çatalca. Deedes does not seem to have come much in contact with Mustafa Kemal, but later he was to work with Enver and Talaat, particularly with the latter, and it may be said indeed that history, like necessity, makes strange bed-fellows.

His knowledge of Turkish conditions and the breadth of his outlook on the problem evidently impressed the Minister of the Interior, for Deedes returned to Smyrna with an official appointment to the Turkish Refugee Committee, instructions to start local industries there, as at Bursa, and an indication from Hacı Adil Bey that he would like to have him on the central committee at Constantinople. Even so, there were many disappointments ahead: first, obstruction from the Smyrna Committee and later the

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failure of the hand-weaving industry, although at Bursa it had been an "unqualified success". The psychological factor must have somehow been adverse, for at Bursa he had had to contend with greater material difficulties, to find lodgings for the women and places where they could work, whereas at Smyrna the Government proposed to build factories and houses for the refugee women who were widows. Yet somehow the scheme went agley and he writes ruefully that he "had gone and spent £80 in vain". Besides this, an elaborate report on a scheme for the employment of refugee males, as well as women, was turned down by the Government, though Vinicombe Pasha said it was the best thing he had read on the subject, for Captain Deedes was the only one who faced facts.

He was restless and uneasy during these months; he saw a problem of immense magnitude and felt that he could, if permitted, make a valuable contribution, but met obstruction at every turn. As Robert Graves writes,<sup>1</sup> "another economic project was an ambitious scheme for the settlement in Asia Minor of Turkish Refugees from the lost European provinces,<sup>2</sup> which had been prepared by the Minister of the Interior, but practically no organized attempt had been made to provide food and shelter for hundreds of thousands of refugees who crowded the towns of Western Anatolia. On this subject our most trustworthy information was that supplied by British Gendarmerie officers, and notably by Deedes, who had been reporting on it since the first arrival of refugees from the European side."

Some allowance must be made for a country which had just been deprived of its African and most of its European possessions, and in which the authority of the central government seemed about to break down at any moment. After the *coup d'état* of January 1913, Mahmud Sevket

<sup>1</sup> *Storm Centres of the Near East*, p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* those ceded to the Balkan Allies by the Peace Treaty of May 30th, 1913.

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Pasha, commander of the Army that had dethroned Abdul Hamid, was proclaimed Grand Vizier, but he in turn was assassinated on June 11th, in broad daylight, in the streets of Stamboul, and it was only gradually that Talaat and Enver, who were to carry Turkey through the Great War till her final defeat in Palestine, could take into their strong and ruthless hands the scattered threads.

Part of the unsettlement in Deedes' mind was also due to the fact that he was obliged to give up the project of entering the Staff College, as he was refused on medical grounds. The one thing he did not want was to spend his life as a regimental officer, but he felt that if he resigned right away he would, after twelve years' service in the Army, not even have received his captaincy.<sup>1</sup> At about the same time that he received this news he was asked by Sir George Tyrrell if he would care to be considered for the vice-consulship of Van or Trebizond. He hesitated; he still hankered after work on the scheme for the land-settlement of refugees and he believed that the Turkish Government, now recognizing his rare knowledge of the country and its conditions, would offer him civilian employment in some capacity if he were free to accept it. From home came admonition and advice to add to the confusion in his mind. The letters of this period give a picture of his mental state; they are scrappy, sometimes incoherent, with notes of interviews with "people of importance" interspersed with arguments *pro* and *con* the courses of action open to him, descriptions of his work among the refugees in outlying villages, and many jottings — impossible to sort into chronological order since he often does not date — of his journeyings up and down Western Anatolia and between Smyrna and Constantinople.

At the end of June he made a tour of inspection in the district round Konya and the solitude did him good, for

<sup>1</sup> He was acting-Captain only at this time.

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when he returned he wrote that he had turned over a new leaf; he felt that he had been getting lazy and slack and had therefore begun serious reading again, and had taken some "heavies" out of the American library. He also contemplated learning a new language, either Arabic or Persian, to give him occupation for the summer! But this project was not put into operation, for he was appointed one of three members on a Commission for Refugees to tour the Eastern Provinces of Anatolia and make a report. There was another Commission, appointed earlier, under one Osman Senayi Bey, and the two Commissions were to cover the district from Samsun, southward to Diyarbakir near the frontier of Syria, and eastward, to Trebizond, Erzerum, and down to Lake Van and Bitlis, towards Persia and Iraq. Deedes' party consisted of Hussein Bey, the President; Colonel Sami Bey; an official (known only as "Jumbo" in Deedes' diary, in allusion to his figure) representing the Ministry of Interior; and Deedes himself.

Having vainly tried to establish contact with the First Commission at Trebizond, they decided to start and take the district from Samsun, south through Amasya and Sivas, to Diyarbakir. They landed at Samsun on July 21st, 1913, that same port from which Mustafa Kemal, having escaped from Constantinople in June 1919, set out, not unlike a second Alfred, to rally to his banner the defeated and demoralized Anatolian peasants, to lead them to unexpected victory, to build a new capital at Ankara, to penetrate this wild interior with railways and, an even more improbable achievement, with the machinery of law and order, with schools and hospitals, and in twenty years to hammer out on the anvil of his indomitable purpose a new great nation.

Deedes and his party walked into Samsun at eight o'clock in the morning, hailed two cab-drivers and chartered two country carriages.



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“ ‘How many hours’ drive are you going?’ says the Arabaci (*i.e.* cab-driver).

“ ‘Well, we think of taking you for six months,’ we said.”

The cab-drivers apparently received this statement unmoved, though it cannot be every day in the week that a cab is chartered for six months. They said that they had better go and bid goodbye to their wives, but they did not prolong their leave-taking and in an hour the party was off, Hussein Bey and Colonel Sami Bey in one carriage, Jumbo and Deedes in the other. It must have been a strange procession which set off into that wild interior in those springless carts, which were like wooden boxes on wheels, with a long pole passing down the centre, on either side of which the passengers sat, and to which the horses were attached. In particular, Deedes’ conveyance must have presented a queer spectacle; a wild-looking Arabaci on the box and, within, a big fat Turk and a small thin Englishman who were cannoned against each other for eight or nine hours at a stretch over roads which were an alternation of deep ruts and large boulders, the whole covered with a foot of fine dust. Then there was Deedes’ luggage, which included a tin basin in which to wash, a selection of books and, in front, well under his eye, a tea-basket such as English ladies of that time provided themselves with when they travelled “on the Continent”, among benighted foreigners who knew not the blessings of tea, and with which they could be seen on any long-distance train, in their dust-coats and veils, solemnly performing the English ritual.

The country into which the mission launched itself was vast, wild and romantic beyond any English lady’s conception; wolves prowled there, blood feuds flourished, there were huge mountain ranges, lying for six months of the year under snow, ravines and gorges where at times the carriages hung perilously on the edge of disaster, lost

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villages where the travellers stayed the night and where no one would have been much the wiser had they all been murdered in their sleep — one of Deedes' characteristic entries indeed (at a roadside han near Zara) is the laconic sentence : " In the night a murder was committed outside our room, otherwise nothing much of importance occurred. . . ." They travelled over the country of the Circassians, those fair-haired Christian folk of the high uplands whose daughters were for centuries much in demand for the harems of wealthy Turks. Deedes found them a likeable as well as a handsome people ; their houses were clean and orderly, in spite of the rigour of their lives, while most of the children, girls as well as boys, could read. They saw, near Amasya and Zile, the remains of Roman civilization and also, Deedes says, old watch-towers built by the Genoese, and monasteries cut in the face of the rock, and ancient tombs and wall-carvings ; they saw miles on miles of rich corn-lands and districts of brown bare plain, brown barren hills, so desolate that it was a wonder men could maintain life there. They had to support the extremes of temperature ; in the inland plains the heat was almost unbearable, on the mountains it was bitterly cold, and only rarely did they find the mean temperature which Deedes so much loves, like Scotland, clear and fresh, as they drove through groves of oak and fir. They ate what they could get, plentiful or meagre fare according to chance ; once again Deedes shared the feasts of Ramazan and once again, as in Tripoli, fought a night-long losing battle with vermin. He had as usual brought his large gauze sleeping-bag but there was one enemy against which he had no defences : the fleas. And of all the vermin in the world, he says, the most ferocious, the most irrepressible, is the large red Kurdish flea — so large, you can see it in the dark !

In that sparsely-inhabited country the distance from one village to another was often very great but they could

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neither sleep nor eat until they reached some kind of habitation. Deedes speaks of "hardish days"; of twenty-three hours on the road in two days, with but few hours' sleep in between, and even he, with all his toughness, confesses to being "done to a kick" at the end of it. During most of this journey, moreover, he suffered from toothache and once or twice records that, at the end of a long day, he could swallow nothing but eggs and yogurt, while the rheumatism, already manifest in Tripoli and now uncomfortably acute in the form of sciatica (due to the cold wet conditions under which he worked with Doughty-Wylie), must have made these long days of jolting in a springless cart exceedingly painful. But he mentions these physical ills but rarely; he has never allowed himself to be dominated by pain, and in spite of rheumatism he would go outside the hut where they had spent the night, on a bitter morning in the mountains, to wash and shave in his tin basin — to the admiration of his companions, though they looked on it as a waste of time! Or he would pass the long hours when the carriages toiled across the wide hot plains reading John Stuart Mill or Huxley, while Jumbo rolled and groaned and sweated beside him. On one occasion he was reading the *Origin of Species* and "nearly ascertained", he writes, "what the end of the species, in the shape of myself, would be", for as they were ascending a steep bank above a river one of the horses jibbed and wheeled suddenly, nearly precipitating the whole Commission down the mountainside to a watery grave. This was at Zara, near Sivas, on a branch of the great Kizil Irmak river that pierces the mountains of Ak Dag', and I imagine that Darwin can have been read in few stranger places than toiling up that rocky gorge of the Anatolian highlands in a Turkish cart.

He attended one of the feasts of Ramazan at a place called Divrik, date "July 26th or so", where they dined in

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a garden on a hot night and were entertained, once the gun which announced sunset had been fired, with the usual enormous meal such as he describes in Tripoli. Such a meal, says he, "if you haven't eaten at all that day . . . taken in double quick time into your interior, gives you a balloon-like feeling, which only quantities of cigarettes and coffee tend to dissipate". On this occasion, in addition to jam, cheese, honey, olives, meat, eggs, vegetables, rice and sweets, they were given soup, into which the whole party plunged their spoons, "and putting half of it on the table-cloth, we put the other half into our mouths or down our jackets. Because it's a difficult thing to guide a spoonful of soup at arm's length into your mouth, when you are sitting down ten to a table meant for four."

After the meal was over, there followed "a curious and very pretty sight. . . . There were about thirty guests present who came after the dinner. At the hour of prayer they all arose, washed, spread their mats, drew up in line and commenced the prayer. The Imam chanted in a melodious sort of voice, the remainder following him bowed down when he bowed, rose when he rose, all together. . . . A small boy did the duty of Muezzin and now and then chipped in in a high-toned voice, bowing away and kneeling on the ground, all the congregation now following him. . . . Their rhythmic exercise (it had thirty-five prostrations) I ascertained went on for about one hour. It was so quiet under the trees in the twilight, and so evenly and quietly carried out, and their voices, led by the Imam and the little Muezzin (who was stone-blind), that really it was not a thing one was likely to forget and I don't suppose many Christians see it."

Humour was not lacking, even in this impressive scene, and was provided by a very fat boy "who evidently found thirty-five prostrations extremely disquieting after what I take had been no light meal. He got hotter and hotter and

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his comrades . . . were convulsed with laughter over his discomfiture. I, too, feared for his belt."

A large part of the country which they traversed was that which has been the scene of the terrible earthquakes of 1939 and Deedes' descriptions of it have a double interest. Here is one, dated from a place called Gurene, some days' journey from Aziziye :

"For the last three days we have left the cultivated land and have traversed brown hills and plains, with occasional villages and trees like oases in a desert . . . huge country, extending as far as the eye can see. . . . This is the country of the Circassians and fine people they are. . . . They dress in a peculiar long black coat, taken in at the waist, black Kalpaks and long knives. . . . They can't speak Turkish (many of them) but have a writing and speech of their own and all their children can read and write, which none of the Turks can.<sup>1</sup> . . . This village was a poor village of some thirty little houses up in the mountains, bare as bare could be. No trees, no green, one brown dry blank for miles and miles ; bitterly cold in winter, six months under snow. Now (August) a beautiful air, like being in Scotland, which the mists on the mountains this morning reminded me of. These people are solely engaged in stock-rearing and that mainly horses. Some of the villages migrate entirely in the winter, when the snow and the wolves, of which there are plenty, come down, and go off to the South, Adana-way, to pasture their flocks and herds. But they're very poor, I conceive."

In spite of the prevailing poverty, the Commission was entertained in a manner which made him exclaim that the celebrated Turkish hospitality was not in it with that of the Circassians ! The small guest-room in which they were installed had beautifully clean carpets on the floor and clean sheepskins hung on the walls, and though their dinner was

<sup>1</sup> In this far-lying and backward district, in 1913.

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served on the floor it was placed on a spotless table-cloth of many colours. The meal itself was simpler than some of the feasts they found in Ramazan, but that to him was no disadvantage and was more than compensated by the cleanliness of its service. They were by no means starved, for they were given coffee on arrival at 4 P.M., offered tea and preserves at 5 P.M., dinner at 7 P.M. and, after discussing a law-suit of the village which had been before the Turkish courts for sixteen years, were offered more refreshments at 10 P.M., after they had been literally put to bed by the village notables. And next morning they were sped on their way with rice, compôte and pastries, and tea in a big Russian samovar. To such people it was easy to forgive "a murder of last night, a tribal row" about which they had to hear as Deedes was busy taking photographs of the children.

One of the best stories of this journey is the tale of their arrest by the rival Commission.

The First Commission, under Osman Senayi Bey, considered itself the senior partner, but Deedes' party, having failed to establish contact with it at Trebizond or to receive any notice of its whereabouts, started without further ado to inspect the vilayets of Sivas, Harput and Diyarbakir. Two days out from Samsun they received peremptory telegrams from Osman Senayi Bey instructing them to return and take the eastward district from Erzerum to Van and Bitlis, but, having started, they thought this an unreasonable proposal and replied that, having begun the inspection of the vilayet of Sivas, they had no intention of breaking off, but they were prepared, when they had finished it, to return to Erzerum and do the eastern district.

Now there was a quarrel between the two Commissions, in which the prestige of the respective leaders and the rights of priority were deeply involved, but for which the main reason — though it does not figure in the official correspondence — was that Osman Senayi Bey was a keen

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lepidopterist and the districts of Sivas and Harput contained certain rare butterflies which were nowhere else to be found. When, therefore, Osman Senayi Bey discovered that Commission Two, with a blind eye for butterflies, was touring Sivas, leaving him the difficult country round Erzerum, without roads and bare of lepidopteral interest, he was very angry. About a fortnight after the first exchange of telegrams, Commission Two arrived back at Tokat for the second time, after a tour to Amasya, Erila and Niksa, and were there made to feel the weight of Osman Senayi's displeasure. The Mayor of Tokat was anxious to keep on the right side of Commission Two, for he had an uneasy conscience and feared that it would advise his removal from office on account of certain malpractices of which he shrewdly suspected they had become aware. He therefore prepared for them a grand propitiatory banquet, but when all the guests were assembled and were preparing to sit down to the feast, a telegram was handed to Colonel Hussein Bey from Osman Senayi Bey, giving him fifteen days' imprisonment for disobeying orders. Hussein Bey consulted with his colleagues and they all agreed that, after such elaborate preparations had been made for their entertainment, it would be bad manners to spoil the party. They therefore partook of the banquet; Jumbo, as usual, doing that justice to it which his name implies, and at the conclusion they rose and announced to their host that he would be pleased to consider them under arrest. Then they drew their swords — Deedes his famous weapon bought for a few shillings in the bazaar of Stamboul — handed them over ceremoniously, and then, says Deedes, "we all went off and imprisoned ourselves together, being all in the same boat, and set up quarters very comfortably in the Redif (Militia) officers' quarters, where we had three rooms to ourselves".

Deedes rather enjoyed his detention; the officers'

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quarters were much cleaner than the verminous han in which they had slept on their first visit, and he had a large bundle of *The Times* "which had turned up from somewhere" with the rest of his mail and his stock of much-travelled books, so that he welcomed the chance of a few days' uninterrupted reading. His companions, of course, were hopelessly bored. None of them, however, intended to spend fifteen days in a desolate little town, in the month of August, if it could be avoided, so Hussein Bey wired to the Minister of the Interior protesting that they were not under the orders of Commission One. Deedes' wire to General Baumann was more subtle. He suggested that since the Commissions were international Osman Senayi had no right to take such high-handed action and that he, in his turn, should be punished by being given a short term of imprisonment. This would automatically release Commission Two. Two days later orders came from Constantinople that they were to set themselves free and proceed with the inspection of Harput and Diyarbakir! In this whole incident, says Deedes, nobody but himself seems to have perceived any trace of the comic.

Apart from his enjoyment of the joke, another benefit accrued from the quarrel with Osman Senayi; his Commission received direct orders to visit Harput and Diyarbakir and were spared Erzerum, where, since it was almost impossible to use wheeled traffic of any kind, they would have had to travel on horseback, an experience he dreaded because of his sciatica.

After their release they went eastward to Kohlhisar and Karahisar, south of Trebizond, and there Deedes was able to restock a wardrobe which was reduced to rags and tatters by ten hours' travelling a day, on foot or in the carriage: ". . . my coat is torn," says he, "my boots are gone in the sole, my socks worn through". He was beginning to be very tired, too, with the alternations of extreme heat and



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extreme cold, the prevailing filth of their lodgings and the ceaseless travelling, and in addition to the toothache which had haunted him throughout the greater part of the journey he had facial neuralgia which had become so painful he thought it would yield to nothing less than injections. What he badly needed was a holiday, after two years of most strenuous living, beginning with his work with Doughty-Wylie near Çatalca, so he was delighted to hear from General Baumann on August 26th that as Colonel Hawker would reach Sivas on September 7th he could go on leave. However, he decided, characteristically enough, that to accept immediate release would show "indecent haste" and that he would go on to Harput, which in any case he would like to see. For the next month therefore, from August 26th to September 26th, he was still travelling, and travelling so hard that he found but little time to write. They had many narrow escapes on the mountainous roads ; it was here that the carriage nearly went down a ravine, carrying with it Deedes and the *Origin of Species*, here too that the carriage-pole broke and they had finally to continue their journey on ponies. Even with ponies, some of the tracks were barely negotiable ; near Malatya, for instance, in the country of the Kurds, they had to pass along a track about eight or nine feet wide, with a precipitous mountain on one hand and a five-hundred-foot drop on the other, and Sami Bey was seized by one of those attacks of mountain-fear which some of us know and was unable to move, forward or backward. They had to wait an hour until his nerve steadied, and the party, even fat Jumbo, skirted that mountain on foot. With the exception of Deedes, for he, true to his theory that the way to avoid danger is to take no notice of it, rode the whole time, and the more the others shouted "Get off! get off!" the firmer he stuck to his saddle. But it was a risky game. The country round Malatya was as wild but less cold than that

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eastwards towards Erzerum; vineyards and orchards were plentiful, and Deedes, unable to eat anything but eggs and yogurt, revelled in fresh fruit as an addition to the monotonous diet on which he had subsisted during eight weeks' strenuous travelling. The last place which he inspected on this tour, Bisni, brought him just within sight of the Euphrates, and then he turned back to Malatya, where he met Colonel Hawker on September 14th. He left Malatya on September 16th and reached Niğde on September 26th, having crossed the great ranges of the Anti-Taurus mountains, where the weather was once more bitterly cold and snow had already begun to fall on the heights. Of that ten days' journey he writes that there is nothing to record, "a succession of dirty hans and sleepless nights", but it must have been country traversed by few travellers at that time, for when he arrived at Niğde, which was "his own country" as it had a gendarme post he had already visited from Smyrna, the gendarmes mingled, with the warmth of their greeting, astonishment at his presence, as if he had dropped from the moon.

## *Chapter Eight*

DEEDES is at once a difficult and an easy subject for a biographer : difficult because of a reserve so great that, like the Great Ice Barrier of the Antarctic, it shuts off from all approach the hidden continent of his heart. Though at times in his youth he was a voluminous correspondent, his letters are concerned almost wholly with his doings, very little with his thoughts, while over the delicate and complex web of his emotions there is almost total darkness. To those who know him well it is apparent that this reserve is not a sign of coldness but of a sensibility so acute that it vibrates to the lightest breath, is bruised by the lightest touch, and must be protected by the armour of a will that does not permit him to care too much for any thing or any person, to attach himself to any desire, to cherish any hope. But this impersonality makes him baffling, and sometimes in the detailed record of his doings one loses sight of the man himself until a remark from one of his contemporaries shows what he appeared to those about him, dynamic, austere, yet with a strange gentleness that makes him much beloved. Or a chance phrase of his own suddenly flashes illumination and reveals that all this busy going to-and-fro, this preoccupation with the affairs of the world and the vigorous attack on its shortcomings, is only a façade behind which the drama of his soul, unexpressed, and perhaps inexpressible, is being played.

But he is an easy subject for a biographer in this : that not only has he moved among strange scenes, played his

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part in some of the most curious and arresting incidents of our time, but that his active life falls into such clearly defined phases that it writes its own chapter-headings. In October 1913, when he reached the railway at Konya after the journey right across Anatolia from Samsun, the chapter of his adventurous journeyings is closed.<sup>1</sup> For three years he had gone up and down Turkish Tripoli and Asia Minor, over mountain and plain, across desert and through fertile valleys; he had eaten and drunk with Arabs in their hot sandy villages; with Circassians on the bleak mountains; with industrious Armenians; with the Turks, lazy and dirty but brave, frank and likeable; with the wild Kurdish tribes, noting their habits and conforming to their customs with a remarkable elasticity of body and mind. But though wearing Turkish uniform and speaking Turkish faultlessly, he never pretended to be other than he was, an Englishman and a Christian, and he listened to the story of murders or observed the religious ceremonies of a feast of Ramazan with the same grave detachment. He took with him his English habits, his tea-basket, his sponge-bag and his handful of books, and if these people and their ways seemed strange to him, how strange he must have seemed to them. But it is clear that he commanded their respect, for his physical endurance, his asceticism of habit and his studiousness were qualities on which primitive peoples, and above all those of the Moslem faith, have always set a high value. And it was not only respect but affection that he won in full measure, because he had learned to approach every man in the light of their common humanity, and his patience, his unfailing courtesy and an almost feminine gentleness of demeanour endeared him to these lawless and untutored people as it has endeared him to many of his own countrymen.

<sup>1</sup> He revisited this district, the scene of the earthquake, in February 1940, at the request of the Anglo-Turkish Relief Committee, but it was a brief visit.

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After this journey from Samsun he entered on the administrative phase of his work which has continued, under various guises and in most remarkably different settings, to the present time. He had now acquired a knowledge, equalled by very few, of the manner in which the Turkish administrative machinery actually worked in these outlying parts of the Ottoman Empire, and one of the first tasks to which he set his hand on returning to Constantinople was to draw up a memorandum on the subject of reforms in the Eastern Provinces. It is interesting to find that already at thirty he was a strong advocate of decentralization, and was as convinced of the value of freedom and elasticity in local administration as he is today. Every Turkish problem, he insisted, was viewed solely from the standpoint of Constantinople, and this was bound to result in failure in an empire whose parts differed as widely from one another, climatically, topographically and socially, as certain of those parts differed from Europe. Advantage should be taken, he urged, of the clearly defined and efficient social organization which already existed among certain homogeneous groups, such as the Kurds, and a large measure of local autonomy granted under the general direction of the Turkish Government and with their support — a system of indirect rule, in short, such as certain other nations, notably the British in Nigeria, were already putting into practice “in the government of subject races at a similar stage of civilization”. He was definitely opposed to the view that administrative reforms could be brought about by the appointment of a large international body of European advisers, and says bluntly (in a letter dated October 4th) that he is not going to talk any bunkum to Talaat about the need for such advisers, but tell him to his face that the country is ill-governed, and what it needs is just simply good government and not a band of Europeans.

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I do not know if this memorandum was ever presented to Talaat, then Minister of the Interior, but if it were he does not seem to have resented the plain speaking, for on several occasions he told Deedes that he would like to have him in the Ministry of the Interior. The question of Deedes' future employment came up with renewed vigour after his return to Constantinople. He was still officially seconded for service in the Turkish Gendarmerie, and his next appointment, therefore, would in the normal course have been to some outlying district to reorganize the Gendarmerie, as he had done in Tripoli. Trebizond was named, and there he would still have been, as at Smyrna, under the command of Colonel Hawker, his superior officer. But the letters of this period show the young man completely in revolt ; he felt he had served his apprenticeship and should be given a chance to make use of the special knowledge he had gained and to prove what he was made of. He told his mother that he categorically refused to be banished to Trebizond ; sooner than that, he would send in his papers and try for a job under the Turkish Government. This must have startled his mother, to whom the Army was a sacrosanct institution, but to Deedes, who had always disliked its formalism and convention, it now appeared as a monstrous obstruction to his hopes and ambitions. He had tasted freedom, in his work in Tripoli ; he had experienced his own powers, in his work for refugees at Bursa ; he was aware of an unusual, even unique, knowledge of Turkish problems, and the thought of being sent to Trebizond to do the same limited piece of work in a limited sphere was intolerable. The letters of this time are not at all happy ones ; he was anxious, even angry, and he had to persuade and, if possible, carry with him the beloved but rigidly convinced mentor at home.

But, fortunately for him, he was already a marked man in both Turkish and Anglo-Turkish circles. A project had

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been mooted for the appointment of two European Inspector-Generals to carry out reforms in the six Eastern Provinces of Trebizond, Erzerum, Van, Bitlis, Harput and Diyarbakir; Talaat was anxious to have Robert Graves appointed as one of the Inspector-Generals, and Graves wanted to take Deedes with him, with the full concurrence of Talaat. Deedes would have liked that appointment and he set to work with his habitual energy to get what he wanted: interviewed the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs and treated him to his views on the Eastern Provinces; attended a committee meeting of the Technical Committee of the Gendarmerie and remarked, not without humour, that he spoke twice as much as anybody else, objected to nearly all they said and brought them round to his point of view — “you know my powers of contradiction and the practicality of my views”. He also passed with flying colours a test as to his command of the Turkish language, reading off a Turkish document at sight and following it up by translating from French into Turkish at top speed. He reports this incident with gusto; he was, and is, justifiably a little vain of his knowledge of Turkish because he says it is the only thing that he has ever done thoroughly!

How thorough this was, the following anecdote serves to illustrate. It was told me by Captain Ian Smith, and delighted me as much as it did the English community in Constantinople. Deedes, wearing the uniform of the Turkish Gendarmérie, was on a visit of inspection to a large lunatic asylum. He was received by the governor of the asylum, anxious to impress, and shown round the building. As they passed through one of the wards an inmate, suddenly pointing at Deedes, shouted: “That man is not a Turk! That man’s an Englishman!”, whereupon the governor, turning to Deedes, murmured sadly, “Poor fellow, poor fellow; he’s one of our worst cases.”

But it was not only his knowledge of the language that

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made both the Turks and many of the British officials anxious to see him given wider opportunities ; after all, a first-class interpreter is not so hard to come by, but a man who combined all the energy of youth with tact, patience and diplomatic acumen, who had besides what Graves spoke of as a wisdom beyond his years, was somewhat of a *rara avis*, even in that company of picked men at Constantinople.

The decision, however, did not rest with them but with the British Government, which decided that no British official should be allowed to accept the post of Inspector-General of the Eastern Provinces, for fear of offending the susceptibilities of the Russian Foreign Office, which considered the vexed question of the mixed Moslem and Christian populations on the Caucasian frontier as its own special purlieu. This ruled out the appointment of Robert Graves and that of Deedes with him, but left still for Deedes the possibility of employment on the scheme for the land settlement of refugees, which he was very eager to obtain, feeling that in this there was opportunity for improving the lot of hundreds of thousands, work of a scope and importance comparable to that carried out by Milner or Kitchener. Just before he went on leave, a communication was received from the Foreign Office to the effect that for the moment no new appointments must be made, but Talaat thereupon applied to the office of the Gendarmerie for Deedes, still officially a Gendarmerie officer, to work under him at the Ministry of the Interior. So Deedes got what he wanted, work directly under the Ministry, and had the further satisfaction of knowing that his English friends in Constantinople were vexed at the Foreign Office decision.

"So now for a happy leave", says he, and went to Smyrna to pack up his belongings and say goodbye to his many friends there, including, apparently, a bunch of young ladies with whom he used to take tea at the Hig-Lif Café,



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and with one of whom — or possibly more — he had conducted an innocent flirtation when he happened to have a spare hour on his hands, which was not often.

It was a short leave of six weeks, but clearly a very active one, for besides embarking on a series of articles on Turkey for the *Nineteenth Century* he sat for his examination for a First-Class Interpretership in Turkish, being determined, he says, to screw the bonus of £165 out of a niggardly Government. He was back in Constantinople just before Christmas 1913, working in the Ministry of the Interior in a room next door to that of Talaat, and in January 1914 he writes triumphantly to his mother that all the clerks of the Ministry had just arrived in a body to present their humble congratulations to Deedes Bey on having been appointed to a Civil Inspectorship, with an Imperial Iradé. An Imperial Iradé was a special confirmation by the Sultan which no change of government in Turkey could upset, and it gave Deedes a most welcome security of tenure. He was officially appointed to superintend the land settlement of the refugees in Bursa, and remarks gleefully that if and when the plan for large-scale settlement, at a cost of £3,000,000, is implemented, he is bound to come into that on the ground floor.

As a matter of fact, this scheme never was put into operation, for the war prevented it, but none the less Deedes had a busy and constructive eight months before August 1914 wrote *Finis* to this part of his career. He worked closely with Robert Graves, who, in March 1914, was appointed adviser to the Ministry of the Interior. The two of them, with Hamid Bey, Chief Civil Inspector, a Turkish official who was both fearless and honest, re-organized the work of the Civil Inspectors throughout the Empire, bringing it into much closer relations with the Ministries of Justice and Finance, and with the Gendarmerie.

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Another reform which Deedes was anxious to see introduced was the abrogation of civil control over the Gendarmerie in the provinces. Brigandage still flourished like a green bay tree in the length and breadth of the Turkish Empire; the disorganization following a series of wars, the extreme poverty of the many landless peasants, the return of soldiers only too well accustomed to murder, rapine and loot, all gave a further impetus to a form of crime which had never been successfully dealt with by the Government. Deedes was convinced that the only way to abolish an evil which had assumed such proportions was to treat it as a military matter, to organize bands of from twenty to fifty picked gendarmes and "drive" the country systematically. But this was impossible while the gendarmes in each "Sanjak" were under the direct control of the civilian authority of the Sanjak, for no district official would consent to the removal of a single gendarme from his own area, or even from the karakol where he was stationed, so great was the terror inspired by the brigands, who, meanwhile, easily avoiding the small and scattered groups of gendarmes, continued their depredations at leisure. Moreover, the leading brigands had each an excellent "Bureau d'Information", as Deedes calls it, whereby they received from the peasants among whom they dwelt information about the movements both of gendarmes and of such people as were worth plundering. These services they of course obtained either by threats or bribes, and Deedes, while still at Smyrna, had tried to set up his own "Bureau d'Information" as a counter-blast, training and paying his own spies. The scheme had failed, partly because of lack of money and lack of men, but partly because of the regional control and the want of co-operation among the civil officials.

The plan which he had in mind may be given in his own words, jotted down hastily in a letter which must surely be

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one of the strangest epistles a mother ever received from her son, as it opens abruptly with the words, "My darling Mother, I am the author of a proposal to deal drastically with the question of brigandage and smuggling . . .", and, having developed the theme, closes with equal abruptness, "yours, W. D.", without a single personal word.

" . . . We propose ", he writes, " that a force shall be collected in the Vilayets of Smyrna, Bursa, Konya, Kastamoni (by taking an average of ten Gendarmes from each company, which gives an average strength of 260 per Province), which force shall be put at the immediate command of O.C. Regiments who, in consultation with Governor-General, will draw up a scheme for the immediate and co-operative pursuit of brigands in those four Vilayets. First of all the four O.C. Regiments will meet in conclave at Afyon Karahisar — a central point of the Bagdad Railway — and confer for a Four-Province scheme. Each will then collect his Battalion Commanders and the whole machinery will be put in motion on a large scale. Indirectly we shall wage war on smugglers, deserters, highwaymen and all evil characters and make, I hope, a clean sweep. . . . I have only given you the outlines of the scheme but it has many details, such as selection of officers, clothing and feeding of men whilst on pursuit (a very difficult thing, as it entails much wear-and-tear which our Budget doesn't foresee), arrangements for telephone and telegraph and railway co-operation, and finally money-rewards as 'incentives', and lastly a 'body of spies'."

Again, time was lacking for the full development of this plan, and there were others also, dear to Deedes' heart, such as the establishment of village pharmacies and village primary schools, which at that time could not come to fruition.<sup>1</sup> But the year 1914, if it failed to bring to Turkey

<sup>1</sup> The advance in this, as in all these respects since the Government of Mustafa Kemal is, according to Deedes, phenomenal.

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these far-reaching social reforms, brought to Deedes invaluable experience. The problem of dealing with all the "evil characters" of a disorganized Turkey, supported by a huge network of spies, gave him a peculiar aptitude for his later work in the Intelligence Service at Gallipoli and in Cairo, when he had to choose and make use of the myriad spies scattered up and down the Near East, when he had to know and counter the espionage methods of the enemy, and when, among the innumerable personages who approached the British for political or private gain, for reasons of personal vengeance or pique, or the lust for power, or pure patriotism, he had to assess the value of each man through some knowledge of his background, his training, his social or regional affinities. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that, of all the men engaged in Intelligence work in Gallipoli and Cairo, Deedes had the most exhaustive knowledge of the Turkish viewpoint, of the play and counter-play of forces in the Turkish Empire, and of Turkish personalities.

Further, the work of these eight months in the Ministry of the Interior, though its narrative lacks the romantic flavour of the preceding three years in the wild hinterlands, was a notable preparation for the years that were to come after, for the complex administrative problems of Palestine, both in 1918 and from 1920 to 1923, and for the great task of social reorganization in England, on which he entered in 1923. Naturally he has learned very much since then and, looking back, he may think the zealous young administrator of 1914 inexperienced and blundering. But it was, as he himself said of an earlier phase, a time of preparation, and having had his first experience of the machinery of administration in a country where the machinery creaked and groaned alarmingly, even when it did not break down altogether, he could take to his later tasks a flexibility of mind in adapting ends to means which a more formal

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training would not have called forth.

Life in Constantinople, if less adventurous than in Tripoli or Sivas, was colourful enough with its large body of international diplomats, experts and advisers, all watching each other with a certain suspicion in those tense months before the storm broke, and with the Turks, skilful and hardened diplomats, ready to fish in the troubled waters of intrigue which seethed uneasily in that cosmopolitan sea. And then there was the social life, various, gay and even more full of intrigue than the diplomatic, where the ladies of the numerous circles took a hand in the game and private jealousies were added to the *poste* and *riposte* of masculine activities. Beyond this European circle lay the ancient Stamboul, with its secret and immemorial existence, into whose atmosphere of passions, intrigues and violence no Westerner could set foot. Deedes, an Englishman, working in the Ministry of the Interior, passed to and fro between the Western and the Eastern worlds, playing golf on the English golf-course, making conversation at European dinner-tables or garden-parties, but spending his days with Turkish officials, soldiers, members of the Government and all those who had a request to proffer or an axe to grind at the Ministry of the Interior. Into the domestic life of the Turk he of course never penetrated; the existence of Turkish women was a sealed book to all non-Moslems till Mustafa Kemal abolished with one stroke of the pen the veil which had shrouded them for centuries, but he mixed with and learned to know the men who were to make history during the war. A curious picture was once flashed before me by a chance remark of his when, refusing to light the cigarette of a third person with the match he held, he was asked if he, of all people, was superstitious. "No," he replied, "but I suppose it's a habit. Once in Constantinople three of us lit our cigarettes from one match and the other two were murdered." The other two were Enver Pasha, assassinated

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in the Caucasus, and Talaat Pasha, assassinated in Berlin. The picture of those three men, close together, bending towards the single match, was arresting : Enver, ambitious, ruthless, the murderer of Nazim Pasha, the brilliant commander who dictated the defence of Gallipoli which cost the Allies forty thousand dead and wounded ; Talaat, equally ruthless but more subtle who, with Enver, threw dust in the eyes of the Allies, negotiated the alliance with Germany which took Turkey into the war and kept her there, in spite of dissension within and pressure without, in spite of defeat, famine and corruption in high places, till Allenby finally swept over the crumpled armies at Megiddo ; and Deedes, austere and aloof, who, moving through innumerable scenes of violence, has never committed an act of violence in his life.

In that strange trio Deedes would hold his own. His absolute integrity, his asceticism of habit and his amazing capacity for sustained work made him something of a legend even then. "Is Deedes still the same?" one of his contemporaries in Constantinople once asked me ; "does he still rise at 5 A.M., eat a rusk and work fifteen hours a day?" "Still the same," was the answer which contained perhaps a half-truth only. For if he is the same in his abilities he is different in the direction of them ; personal ambition, which was the natural-enough mark of the exceptional young man of 1913-1914, has vanished completely, submerged in the greater and selfless ambition of seeing certain work brought to fruition, no matter by whom, nor to whom credit may be given, while the "parleyings with certain people of importance", which bulked largely during that brief period of his life, have given place to a temper which, far from seeking eminence, seeks persistently to avoid it.

## *Chapter Nine*

ON August 2nd, Deedes embarked on the perilous adventure of the Great War. He left Constantinople on the Orient Express and travelled across a Europe already at war. Germany, Austria, Serbia and Russia were at grips, France and Belgium mobilized, England on the brink, awaiting the mandate of her people on the issue of Belgium's neutrality. It is strange to think that these international trains were still running, but no one had yet fully grasped the magnitude and disorganization of a modern war; people knew only the wars of the past, limited to the combatant armies, where folk beyond the area of the battlefields went about their ordinary business. Deedes himself certainly did not realize the dangers ahead, when he stepped into the train, perhaps never during the whole journey, though he was three times stopped and questioned on suspicion of being a spy. The first time was at Czernovitz, which was at that time on the frontier between Rumania and the portion of Poland then included within the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. He was travelling in company with another Englishman, an engineer also in the employ of the Turkish Government who was advising them on the building of a railway, and who had in his possession certain plans of railway bridges and such-like technical matters. These plans were the cause of all their troubles, for the two men were taken out of the train at Czernovitz and subjected to a severe cross-questioning. Both averred that they were in the employ of the Turkish

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Government, Deedes suppressing the fact that he was a British officer and stating that he had been seconded by the Foreign Office for service in the Ministry of the Interior. They were allowed to proceed, for Austria was not then at war with Britain, but information must have been telegraphed concerning them, for they were stopped again at Breslau, in Silesia.

Here there was need of a cool head and a ready tongue, for they were in Germany, to which the British ultimatum had already been delivered, and German officials were naturally suspicious of two Englishmen travelling from Constantinople with maps of railway bridges and lines in their possession. But Deedes has a remarkable sang-froid and, when he chooses, an inscrutable countenance, and they cleared this second fence by pointing out that, since they were going to Berlin, it would be quite easy to keep track of them. Once more they were allowed to continue their journey, and they reached Berlin without further hindrance on the evening of August 3rd, and went to the Hotel Adlon.

They seem to have gone to a café and afterwards to have strolled about the streets, for Deedes' impression of that Sunday-evening crowd, enjoying their weekly holiday on the hot August night, was that the man-in-the-street, twenty-four hours before the expiration of the British ultimatum, was convinced that Great Britain would never go to war with Germany, Belgium or no Belgium. It is curious that that same conviction persisted in September 1939.

On the morning of August 4th, as Deedes and his companion were leaving the Hotel Adlon, they were arrested and taken to the offices of the Secret Police. In the cab, on the way thither, Deedes told the engineer that he was going to stick through thick and thin to the account of himself he had already given, since if he confessed to being a British officer he would undoubtedly not be allowed to



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continue his journey. So, faced immediately with the question as to whether he was not in the British Army, he lied coolly and consistently ; his passport, made out in the name of Mr. Wyndham Henry Deedes, was before the police, but in his pocket were his visiting-cards, inscribed Captain W. H. Deedes, King's Royal Rifles, and his luggage lying at the Hotel Adlon bore the same inscription. Deedes himself owns that at this moment he took the most foolish risk of his life, for the most casual search would have revealed his identity and then nothing could have saved him from the accusation of being a spy, but he adds that the warmentality of nations was a thing then unknown to him and he did not appreciate the greatness of the risk. The police were unsure of themselves, too ; they had lived and been trained in a law-abiding land and the disregard of all law which has characterized Europe since 1914 had not yet affected them ; they hesitated to imprison a man who might be proceeding on his lawful occasions. Moreover, his coolness baffled them, and when he affirmed that he was well known to the Turkish Ambassador and they had better telephone to the Embassy and enquire, they proceeded to do so. This was indeed a gamble on the part of Deedes, for it was more than possible that the Secretary to the Embassy would reply that Captain Deedes had been seconded for service in the Ministry of the Interior, but instead he replied, "Deedes Bey ? Oh, yes, we know him well."

The Germans at that time were most anxious to keep on good terms with the Turks, but the police were only half reassured, because of the incriminating maps. However, they let Deedes go, with the order that he was to report to them twice a week for the duration of the war, and he stepped into the street, probably the last man to try such an escapade in Germany and get off with his life.

He had to leave behind him the English engineer, who, less lucky than he and more innocent, was interned at

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Spandau throughout the whole war. They did not see each other again till 1923, when they met by chance in Whitehall.

Deedes, however, was by no means out of the wood. He realized that it was impossible for him to leave Berlin, nor could he return to the Hotel Adlon, where lay the damning evidence of his luggage, and he was wandering somewhat aimlessly through the streets of this unknown city when he suddenly saw the British flag flying above a building. He was in the Wilhelmstrasse and that house was the British Embassy. There were German sentries guarding the doors, which were besieged by a large crowd of British people, anxious to get help, or at least information, from the Embassy, but Deedes, small of stature, slight and unobtrusive in appearance, has a curious quality of rapid movement ; he can bring all his muscles instantaneously into play at the dictate of his will, more like a wild animal than civilized man, and even now, in middle age, he can eliminate himself from a crowd of people with a suddenness which is quite startling. He must have gone through that crowd and past the sentries with the spring of a cat, for he found himself safely inside the Embassy. He asked to see the Military Attaché, whom he knew, and told his story. The Military Attaché pulled a long face, as well he might, and took him to the Ambassador. Sir Edward Goschen said that it was impossible for him to leave the Embassy again, for undoubtedly England and Germany would be at war in a few hours, and Deedes, at large in Berlin after the story he had told the Secret Police, would be highly unlikely to escape a firing-squad. The Ambassador therefore decided that he must take Deedes out with him on a diplomatic pass.

"How many passes have been allotted to us?" he asked the Military Attaché.

"Twenty-four, your Excellency," was the reply.

"How many have we already allotted?" he said. The answer came to add the final touch of drama to this whole

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incident, "Twenty-three, your Excellency."

"Give Captain Deedes the twenty-fourth," said the Ambassador.<sup>1</sup>

That night Deedes slept in the Embassy Ballroom and heard, to the breaking of glass and the rattle of stones, the excited crowd demonstrating against Great Britain when, after midnight, war reigned between the two nations. At the same hour, in London, a huge and silent crowd was massed outside Buckingham Palace where the symbolic heart of England was unconsciously felt to lie, not in the person of the King but in the mystical conception of Kingship.

Next morning the German Government presented formal and correct apologies for the popular demonstration, and the Ambassador left the Embassy with his train. Among them was Deedes, under the designation of a journalist. The Ambassador in his car, the secretaries, journalists and others in taxis, were driven across Berlin with the blinds closely drawn and put into a guarded train of which the blinds were also down. At every station at which they stopped, crowds gathered on the platform and demonstrated against England, singing the *Wacht am Rhein*, but that which Deedes chiefly remembers of the journey across Germany is the troop trains pouring westward, all decorated with green boughs and nosegays, as for a festival. They were filled with cheering and laughing soldiers, gay with little bunches of flowers stuck in their caps and tunics, given to them by the people. Deedes may well have asked himself since how many of those flower-decked young men came back from the grim festival of the Western Front.

When he reached England he was sent at once to work in the Intelligence Department of the War Office, and at the

<sup>1</sup> This is Deedes' own verbal account of the incident; it does not of course pretend to be a verbatim record of the conversation, but the fact of his escape on the last diplomatic pass not unnaturally made a deep impression on him.

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beginning of January 1915 he began to keep a diary of the events which came under his notice. It is a series of rough notes, completely impersonal and such as might be kept by a man who had the ultimate intention of writing his own memoirs ; it offers no record, save by implication, of the writer's personal reactions to the heavy anxieties and the stupendous problems which burdened the War Office and the Admiralty, and it is, no less than his letters, devoid of literary form or intention. But because these jottings were made at the moment by a man with a keen eye for the importance of events, and because they have never been touched, and perhaps not even read by him, since they were written, they are a particularly valuable record of the great drama of the Gallipoli campaign, its preparation, its conduct and its ultimate failure, in which he played his part. There are many notable memoirs by those cast for principal parts in the Great War, and Deedes was in a position to see only a section of the stupendous canvas on which the picture was painted. Furthermore, he lacks, save on rare occasions, that gift of the written word which can give to a reader not only the event but the psychological atmosphere with which it was surrounded, the whole complex of personalities, impulses and tensions in which the drama of a situation resides. But the very objectivity of these notes gives them a special value ; they are what he saw and thought at the moment of happening, no later knowledge casts back its deceptive glimmer on their bare outline, and no literary impulse of craftsmanship gives them coherence or invests them with that "emotion recollected in tranquillity", which is the quality not of poetry alone but of all literature. They were written under the stress of events and by a man who was quite incredibly busy ; the capacity for long hours of work which made him a byword with his contemporaries in Turkey was sustained throughout the war with hardly a break, and it is indeed remarkable that, in the midst of

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labours so unremitting and at times of dangers so immediate, he managed to cover so many sheets of paper.

The diary begins abruptly with a note, dated January 25th, 1915, that a force of some three thousand Turks had appeared in the vicinity of the Suez Canal. It is retrospective for events in the autumn of 1914, but from the scattered and at times haphazard entries it is possible to obtain momentary flashes of illumination on the shaping of events in those fateful early months. The record of a conversation, the description of an interview, sometimes only a note of the gossip current in the inner circles of the War Office, though they are not in the main stream of history, are interesting in that they often contribute to an understanding of the forces that went to the making of history. It must be remembered that at that time Deedes was only a junior officer, working in one section of the Intelligence branch of the War Office and in no position to be taken into the inner councils of the great, and it therefore says much for the acuity of his perception that he understood so clearly the significance of the diplomatic manœuvres, the strategic proposals and counter-proposals whose echoes reached him. Very early, too, he began to make his mark by his special and intimate knowledge of Turkish affairs.

In September he several times was sent to the Turkish Embassy, before Turkey openly declared war, and on one occasion overheard a conversation between Tewfik Pasha, the Ambassador, and two other Turks, as to the strength of the feeling aroused in Turkey by the retention by the Admiralty of the two Turkish warships built in England. This he reported to Sir George Clarke but, as is well known, the Admiralty did not feel it could part with the ships. From subsequent conversations which Deedes had with the Turkish Ambassador — “a nice, harmless old-world Turk” with whom he seems to have been on excellent terms — it is doubtful whether the release of the ships could

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have made any difference, for the deciding factor in the Turkish decision was the fear of Russia, reinforced by a conviction of the superior strength of Germany.

It is worth quoting in full one long interview which Deedes had with Tewfik Pasha when the situation was critical, the Turks having already begun to move in the direction of Egypt :

“ . . . When things were on their last legs, on the occasion of my last visit but one, I said to him [Tewfik Pasha], ‘Why not tell your Government that you have — as I know you have — assurance from the Entente Powers that the integrity of the Ottoman Empire will be maintained if Turkey observes her neutrality, and counsel as to the wisdom of this step?’

“He said, ‘I have told them so repeatedly, but Enver answers me : “At the time of the Balkan war you gave us from Paris the same assurance. The result was that the *status quo*, which Sir E. Grey promised us would be maintained in Macedonia, was not adhered to. He said we were not to have Adrianople and we went back. He said the Islands should be handed over to the Powers for their safe keeping and he handed them back to the Greeks. Obviously, therefore, the Entente Powers are unable to uphold the assurances they give and which you again offer us.” ’ ”

This significant conversation is a grim commentary on the folly of giving undertakings which cannot be implemented, and when it is recalled what Turkey’s entry into the war against the Allies meant in terms of human lives and human suffering, the ineluctable logic of history produces a feeling of awe.

Tewfik Pasha continued, “ ‘We firmly believe that if the Entente wins, Turkey will be divided up — Syria to France, Armenia to Russia, Persian Gulf hinterland to England. On the other hand, Germany will probably, if her group win, leave us what we have. Our obvious duty then is to

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throw what weight we can into the scale against the Allies and with Germany.' ”

Deedes reported these weighty matters to Kitchener “on a certain Sunday”, but Kitchener, as is well known, never viewed the Turkish factor as one of major importance; he considered the British position in India and in Egypt — both of which countries he knew well — was sound and that Turkey, therefore, was at worst a minor preoccupation.

One does not know whether Kitchener reported Tewfik Pasha's frank statement to the Cabinet, but he instructed Deedes to go back to the Ambassador with the threat, not from Kitchener direct but from authoritative sources, that if Turkey entered the war on the side of Germany the Entente Powers would proceed to the limit to encompass her downfall. Deedes discharged this unwise and unwelcome mission without forfeiting his friendly relations with Tewfik Pasha, who said, when Deedes took leave, “Come again to see me.”

“I said, ‘Honoured Excellency, but shall I find you still in the house?’

“I repeated our last words to K. that evening at 7 P.M. in Carlton Gardens, whereat he was much amused. But I felt, and conveyed to him, that the game was up! — as indeed it was. A few days later Turkey declared war. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Deedes was of the opinion, from which he never deviated, that a dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire would ill serve the cause of ultimate European peace. He therefore drew up a scheme which he called “*Plan for the Retention of a Turkish sphere*”, and says of it, “I based my argument on political [international] and administrative arguments, showing that a buffer state between the portions allotted to the other Powers was very desirable — that it would facilitate [*sic*] the difficulties that the jealousy

<sup>1</sup> October 31st, 1914.

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over boundaries would bring up and would incidentally somewhat curtail the large share given to Russia. Administratively, it would obviate the chances of the recurrence of 'Macedonian' conditions in Turkey and would obviate the chance of leaving a discontented majority of Turks in everybody's sphere."

He wrote two papers on the subject ; the first was sent to Kitchener and found "if not favour (hardly to be expected from K. towards the Turks) at all events recognition, I fancy. My second paper — somewhat abstruse and more in the nature of an essay — went to FitzGerald and I heard no more about it."

It is remarkable that a man of Deedes' age, lacking all training in the complex arts of diplomacy, should have perceived so clearly and at so early a date the dangers latent in the Entente attitude towards Turkey. Throughout the war, after the failure at Gallipoli as well as before, he never departed from his conviction that the Turks should retain in large measure their position in the Near East and, though in January 1915 he was to hear no more of the papers sent to Kitchener, in November of the same year he put his views before Colonel Maurice Hankey,<sup>1</sup> and again in January 1916, and received from him a long and reasoned answer which will be referred to in due course.

Fragmentary and laconic as they are, these War Office notes manage to convey something of the atmosphere that pervaded the nerve-ganglion in Whitehall in the early days of the war, the preoccupations and anxieties as things went ill with France and Belgium, the quest for diplomatic or strategic advantages, the plans thrown up by the ferment of events, considered and rejected, the winds of rumour, blowing now hot, now cold, that swept through the draughty corridors of the War Office and the Foreign Office.

<sup>1</sup> Now Lord Hankey, P.C., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O. He was Secretary to the War Cabinet.



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Deedes notes as they arose the proposals : for the dispatch of an expeditionary force to Üsküg, both in order to help the Serbians and to make an impression on the Balkans ; for the landing of 25,000 men at Alexandretta, with the help of the Navy ; for the seizure of the Frisian islands ; of the island of Borkum ; for an attack on the Kiel Canal — all with the object of breaking the deadlock which was already becoming apparent on the Western Front and of taking off the hard-pressed Russians some measure of the German offensive. Deedes' knowledge of Turkish conditions was already sufficiently well recognized for him to be asked to draw up a paper on the political (as separate from the strategic) aspect of an expedition to Alexandretta, and he wrote that politically Alexandretta was a weak spot in the Turkish defences as the population was largely Christian, Syrian and Armenian, and might therefore be expected to rise against their Turkish masters on the appearance of a British expedition. In a later note he writes that the scheme seems likely "to die a temporary death owing to the lack of transport", but he did not at the time know the extreme uneasiness felt by the British Commander in Egypt at the thought of withdrawing 25,000 men from the vital defence of the Suez Canal, which was implicit in the scheme as adumbrated.

The Üsküg project was also abandoned — wisely, as Deedes thought at the time — in view of the very great difficulties of transporting 200,000 British troops, unused to climatic conditions in the Balkans and operating far from their base, while anything short of complete success must have disastrous repercussions among the Balkan Powers. A decision was still pending when Ralph Glyn returned from Belgrade and reported among the Serbian troops such a prevalence of sickness and infectious diseases as must inevitably jeopardize the British troops. This consideration, together with the grave difficulties of transport, tipped the

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balance against the plan ; moreover, by this time the project for the dispatch of an expedition to the Dardanelles was gathering momentum.

Of the strictly "Intelligence" aspect of his work Deedes makes some scattered but interesting notes. A section of the Intelligence staff, under Windsor Clive, obtained the German code for wireless messages as early as September ; three times the Germans changed it and three times the British obtained fresh possession of it.

"Rumour had it", writes Deedes, "that once it was found on a dead German, another time that the French Government had bought it. Suffice it to say that it was in our possession just at the time of Von Kluck's big cavalry move and when the Seventh Division was in its most precarious position. We used to receive the message, digest it with the help from our maps . . . and send it on to G.H.Q. or Rawlinson at Ostend, and often got it through within a few hours after it had been dispatched by the Germans in the field. . . . The information we thus obtained was, at that period of the war, sometimes of great value, enabling us to forestall the German movements."

They intercepted many strange messages, some of a completely trivial nature dealing with matters of regimental discipline, such as the dismissal of an officer for some fault or other, and also the famous German order about the good treatment to be given to Indian prisoners whom "it is intended to use for other purposes" — the purpose, Deedes notes, being to send them into Turkey to stir up Moslem fanaticism against Great Britain. They also had news of the movements of the Kaiser when he was visiting the Front, and as a result, remarks Deedes with a flash of pawky humour, His Majesty was only misbombed by some three-quarters of an hour !

One entry in the diary throws a momentary but amusing spotlight on the personality of Kitchener and the tact which

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had to be exercised by the minnows towards that Triton : “ . . . after losing the cypher the second time we decided not to tell K. of its third discovery, as we feared his talking. He was apt to enquire before other people, ‘ What intercepted messages have arrived ? ’ So we used to convey the information to him as ‘ special information ’ . ” In spite of the discretion of Kitchener’s subordinates, however, the story of intercepted wireless messages got into the press and the Germans changed their code once more. The British never got it again — not at least while Deedes was at the War Office — for the Germans were now awake to the fact that the enemy had had it, if indeed, as Deedes remarks, they had not known all along.

It is the Dardanelles project, however, which gives the dominant interest to these War Office notes. The story of this grandiose conception, of the fatality which accompanied its execution, and of its ultimate failure, can be studied in the second volume of Churchill’s *World Crisis*, in the Report of the Dardanelles Commission and in the two volumes of the official history, presented by General Aspinall-Oglander with a nobility of treatment and style which makes of an official record a contribution to literature. Deedes’ diary of the events cannot enter into competition with these books, but it does contribute to our knowledge of the story a great deal of value. It contains many intimate details which could not find place in the grand scale of history and also, because it was written down at the time, it gives indication of the veering winds of opinion which swung the anxious minds of the men at the Admiralty and the War Office in those early days, now blowing towards the Bosphorus, now towards Üsküg or Alexandretta, as they sought for means to take the enemy on the flank and stay the slaughter on the Western Front.

Deedes first speaks of the project some time in the week between January 17th and January 23rd, saying that

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personally he thought the scheme a bad one, though he does not develop his reasons for so thinking. But on January 27th he was sent to see Churchill and frankly avowed that, though he had passed the Straits very frequently, he had no topographical knowledge of the country either side of them, nor of the adequacy of forts and roads. Churchill, however, said to him, "'Tell me, how would you try and enter the Straits?'" I replied, 'I would sooner not give a reply, Sir. I have no technical knowledge of these matters and should only say the wrong thing.'

"'No, no,' said Winston, 'I want to hear your reply.'

"After having refused again I was finally forced to reply and said, 'I suppose one would batter the forts down, then rush through and probably lose several ships.'

"'I knew you would say that,'" was Churchill's comment, and he then proceeded to show this young junior officer in great detail how he proposed to reduce the forts by a long process of battering, passing from one side of the Straits to the other. He wound up by pointing to a position "West of the neck of land on the left-hand side of the Straits going up to Constantinople" (Deedes must mean Bulayir), and announcing, "'There I shall have one of my ships which fires twenty-five tons fifteen miles. You didn't know I had a ship like that, did you?'" To which Deedes replied "No, sir," and came away, clearly impressed with the dynamic quality of Churchill but wondering if Churchill thought him a fool. History does not record what were the views of the First Lord.

The next entry concerning the Dardanelles is dated February 6th, when the question had arisen as to whether Deedes should be sent to Egypt to deal with the many Turkish prisoners in British hands, to ascertain which of them were opposed to the Government of Enver and Talaat, and to persuade certain disaffected officers to return to Syria and help to swell the volume of discontent which

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was known to exist in the Turkish army. He talked the matter over with his chief, General Buckley, who discussed it with Colonel FitzGerald, but it was decided that since some time would be needed for Deedes to get to Egypt, and since the bombardment of the Dardanelles forts was timed to begin on February 15th and the project for a landing at Alexandretta at the same time had still not been rejected, it was too late to launch Deedes on the enterprise of suborning disaffected Turkish officers in Egypt. Once again Deedes repeated his conviction that, in view of the wide unpopularity of the Government of Enver and Talaat, peace could be had with Turkey under a fresh Government if the Allies would promise to secure Turkish rule in Anatolia and the retention of Constantinople. Once again Kitchener agreed that it was "a good idea" and something might be done in that way after the arrival of the Allied fleet at Constantinople.

Of the bitter controversies which divided the Cabinet on the question of the Dardanelles expedition, of the conflict between Churchill and Fisher, of Lord Kitchener's alternating "Yea" and "Nay" on the employment of a military force to support the Navy, of the pressure brought by the French Higher Command on Kitchener and General French to prevent the diversion of any British troops from the Western Front, only faint echoes reached the ears of Deedes, a captain of thirty-two, serving in the Intelligence Department. But he does record one story, told him by Buckley, of "Two people" being sent to Constantinople, with a million pounds at their disposal, to try to *buy* the Dardanelles! This would seem a fairy-tale if subsequent history had not revealed the fantastic under-currents which traversed Europe during this war, but he records it laconically enough, with the comment that an article in *The Times*, reporting that Abdul Hamid (still in exile) had counselled the Young Turks to make peace with the Allies, might not be unconnected with it.

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But now the stage was set for the drama of Gallipoli. On February 17th Deedes writes that "the new scheme (Wortley says he expects one every day) is to land the 29th Division on Lemnos where, it is argued, it can then be launched — *sic*! — in any required direction. . . . The O.C. of that Division, having ascertained from the map-index where Lemnos was, naïvely enquired whether motor-transport (as laid down in the hand-book) should be taken! I said I was afraid if they took that sort of thing with them they would run the risk of sinking the Island!

"Incidentally", he continues, "Winston Churchill thinks that to have a Division at his back will help him to get through the Dardanelles. A scheme I view with some apprehension. I asked the other day what they mean to do when they get to Constantinople? Shell the town? How guard their communications and get supplies? I doubt whether it had been thought out very *etraflico* — all round."

When penning this, Deedes did not know that the 29th Division had been offered to Greece as an inducement to her to join the Allies, nor that Admiral Sir H. Jackson had reported on February 15th that "a naval bombardment was not recommended as a sound military operation unless a strong military force was ready to assist".<sup>1</sup> But his appreciation of the difficulties inherent in the enterprise is the more remarkable because of his limited knowledge, and he sums up this whole passage with the comment, bitterly ironical in view of the history of the next ten months, "Buckley agrees with me in thinking that the experiences of the 29th Division are likely to excel Gulliver's Travels".

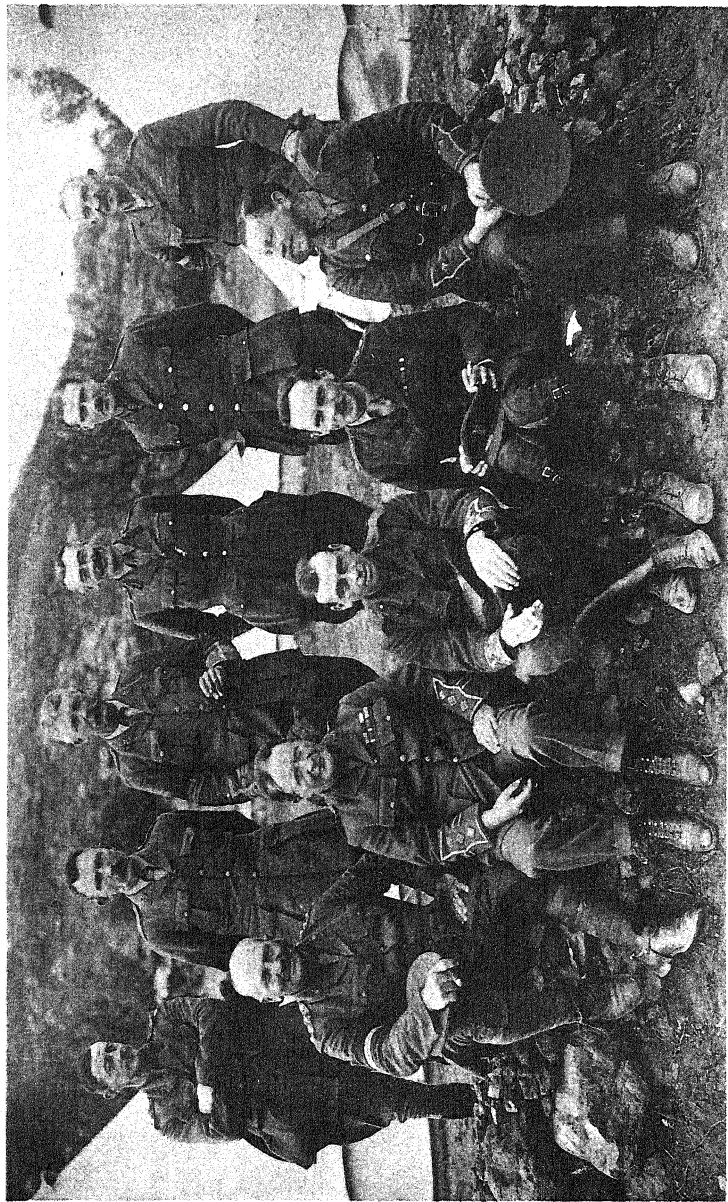
A day or two later he ends this part of his diary with the words, "I am beginning to mobilize, as I may go on Gulliver's Travels with the 29th Division. . . ."

<sup>1</sup> Churchill, *World Crisis*, vol. ii, pp. 178-179.

## Chapter Ten

THE campaign in Gallipoli impresses the imagination more strongly than any other single episode of the Great War. To begin with, it is a single episode, it conforms to the dramatic unities of time and place ; and from February 19th, 1915, when it was launched with the naval bombardment of the Straits, till January 8th, 1916, when the last weary but indomitable troops were evacuated from Cape Helles, the whole action can be sharply focussed on a narrow stage. That stage, moreover, was of a historic interest only equalled by the scene of the Palestine campaign : at the mouth of the Straits, Athens had met her fate in the last great naval battle of Aegospotami ; on the Asiatic shore lay the ruins of Troy and the plain of Ilium, where Greek fought with Trojan ; there too ran the Scamander, of which Homer writes, and there was the beach where the Greek ships loaded the spoils of Troy and the wailing cohorts of the captive women. In the blue and stormy Aegean lay the islands whose lovely names are powerful to evoke historic memories : Lemnos, Imbros, Tenedos, Mitylene, once the home of Sappho, Scyros and Samothrace ; they ring a silver chime audible even through the thunder of the guns. It was on Scyros that Rupert Brooke was buried, in an olive-grove overlooking the sea, and the Greek interpreter wrote on the wooden cross above his grave :

εὐθαδὲ κεῖται  
ὁ δούλος τοῦ θεοῦ



W. D. with his Staff, Gallipoli, 1915





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ἀνθυπολοχαγὸς τοῦ  
Ἀγγλικοῦ ναυτικοῦ  
ἀποθανὼν ὑπὲρ τῆς  
ἀπελευθερώσεως τῆς  
κων· πόλεως ἀπὸ  
τῶν Τουρκῶν.<sup>1</sup>

in a language which, debased and impoverished as it now is, was once the language of Homer and Aeschylus.

And the story of the campaign, as it unrolls itself incident by incident, day by day, has not only dramatic unity but also the inevitability of tragedy. There is a shadow of the impending disaster cast even across the opening phases ; one may see in the personalities of the actors, as they emerge one by one into the limelight of action, the special cast of character — be it weakness, or stubbornness, or pride, or even gallantry misdirected — which contributes to the catastrophe. Even the narrow margin by which victory was displaced by defeat is itself in the tradition of tragedy, holding the spectator in suspense to the end, while the catharsis of tragedy is not lacking at the last, a purgation of the soul in humble amazement that such treasures of courage, of endurance and loyalty should lie in common men and be so barrenly poured out.

Through this scene moved Deedes, regardless of that vast hinterland of historical association which loomed in the minds of so many of his comrades, like the dim outline of Mount Ida far away on the southern horizon, but acutely aware of the threatening disasters and keen-eyed to the failures of organization and of temperament which dogged the enterprise from the outset.

“ . . . We are such good improvisers, one is told,” he writes on May 8th, “ but we carry that to such an extent that we for ever improvise and never organize, and the

<sup>1</sup> Here lies the servant of God, sub-lieutenant in the English Navy, who died for the deliverance of Constantinople from the Turks.

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confusion existing at the moment here, with prisoners, Greek workmen, labour-bands from Alexandria, is quite appalling. . . . A hundred times a day I find myself saying as I used to at the War Office : How do we come to possess such an Empire and how have we kept it ? ”

Hard words indeed ! But already, by May, and before the appalling losses of June and of August, the dangerous flaws in the elaborate structure of the expedition were apparent to this clear-sighted and singularly dispassionate young man.

The flaws were in the very foundations. The fatal indecision of the War Cabinet, the agreement early in February to support the naval bombardment of the Straits with a military expedition, the reversal of this policy at the end of February, the fresh decision, on March 10th, to dispatch the 29th Division, though by then the necessary transport had been dispersed, all this is now common knowledge. It is not possible, in a book of this kind dealing with the personal record of one man and that man a young officer who played a minor, though often important, part in these events, to enter into the controversies over the policy and conduct of the campaign which raged for many years and are even yet not stilled. The story has been often told : by the man who saw the brilliant strategic opportunities in the project,<sup>1</sup> by many of the principal actors in the drama,<sup>2</sup> by journalists and men of letters ; Deedes' diary of the events supplies perhaps no more than a footnote, but a footnote of a peculiarly illuminating nature, because he was in the centre of things and he set down what he saw and heard day by day with absolute honesty and astonishing clarity of vision. But in order to give significance and coherence to the

<sup>1</sup> *The World Crisis*, by Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, C.H., vol. ii.

<sup>2</sup> *Official History of the War: Military Operations—Gallipoli*, compiled by Brig.-General C. F. Aspinall-Oglander, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. ; *Gallipoli Diary*, by General Sir Ian Hamilton, G.C.B.

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jottings in his diary some knowledge of the general unfolding of the action is necessary.

When Deedes left England then, on February 23rd, on his first stage of "Gulliver's Travels", he left in the belief that the 29th Division was under orders to sail and that the first phase of military operations was inaugurated. He was one of the three special Intelligence Officers with a knowledge of the Middle East, the other two being Doughty-Wylie and George Lloyd,<sup>1</sup> and his instructions were to proceed to Lemnos and to collect all available information as to the number of Turkish units at Constantinople or in the neighbourhood, their state of preparedness, their psychological attitude, the strength of the opposition to the Government of Enver and Talaat, and the reactions of the mixed populations of the islands. He picked up Doughty-Wylie in Marseilles and after some difficulty they managed to get berths on a French collier sailing for Malta. They reached Lemnos on March 6th, only to find that no one particularly wanted them or knew what to do with them; Admiral Wemyss, commanding the Mediterranean Fleet, told them to go aboard the *Ionian* with the Australian Brigade, but when they reported to Admiral Carden at the Dardanelles he told them to go back to Lemnos and await General Birdwood, Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Forces, who had meanwhile returned to Alexandria. Neither Deedes nor Doughty-Wylie was likely to take kindly to kicking his heels unemployed on a Greek island, and Deedes was fortunate to find himself involved in one of those curious little "side-shows" of which the Eastern theatre of war was so frequently the scene.

Early in March Admiral Pears had received orders from the Admiralty to bombard Smyrna and reduce the forts. "Whether", as Deedes writes, "the Admiralty were in-

<sup>1</sup> Major Doughty-Wylie, V.C., killed during the landing at Cape Helles in April 1915; Lord Lloyd of Dolobran, G.C.S.I., D.S.O.

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sufficiently supplied with Intelligence, or from whatever cause it may be, the fact remains that they do not appear to have realized that this, far from being easy of accomplishment, was, with the force then employed, practically impossible. . . . The Turks stated that after the bombardment practically no damage was done in men or material — this, the Admiral himself believes to be the case. . . .”

Besides being an ineffective action, it was a highly unpopular one. The Greek Government objected, because not only was the population of Smyrna predominantly Greek, but the city was a coveted objective to them throughout the war and they did not wish it blown to bits. Many neutral countries also, particularly Holland, had nationals there and would not welcome the destruction of valuable property and businesses. The British Foreign Office, therefore, intervened with a protest to the Admiralty and the Admiral was instructed “to make the best terms possible and get out of the thing with the least loss of prestige, having put us into an impossible position . . .” in the words of Deedes. Admiral Pears, therefore, offered a two-days truce and entered into negotiations with the Vali of Smyrna, demanding that the forts should be dismantled, the mines swept and that Smyrna should remain a free port throughout the war, open to Allied trade, and should not be used as a base for hostile craft. In return, the British Government undertook not to damage the city, to respect the Government of the Vali and to perform no hostile act towards Smyrna. Were these conditions to be rejected, the Admiral stated that he would be reluctantly compelled to destroy the forts by bombardment, whatever the damage to the city. But this last was a threat which could not, with the force of the Admiral’s command, be put into effect, as everyone knew, Turks and British alike. The two-days truce expired without a sign from Smyrna. The suggestion of Doughty-Wylie to Admiral Carden, therefore, that Deedes should be

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sent down to parley with the Vali, was welcome both to Carden and Pears.

Deedes was an old friend of the Vali, Rahmi Bey, and he wrote a personal note in Turkish, expressing the hope that His Excellency would grant him an interview, and taking his own letter and one from Admiral Pears couched in more diplomatic language than former communications, Deedes set off in a picket-boat for Urla, a port some twenty miles from the city. Arrived there, he was met by two police officers who informed him that the Vali's envoy had already put to sea to deliver a letter to Admiral Pears. Deedes spoke to the men in Turkish, informing them that he was Deedes Bey of the Gendarmerie, whereat one of the men claimed acquaintance with him, and when Deedes asked if he might land and telephone to the Vali, both the policemen agreed heartily, saying, "Oh, do come! Yes, that will be all right." The officer in charge of the picket-boat, however, being responsible for Deedes' safety, was so averse to the idea of a British officer landing on enemy territory that Deedes forbore. Later, he found the Vali's envoy in a boat under a white flag and "the meeting was cordial in the extreme", says he, for the envoy also was an old friend, the Kaymakam of Çeşme, and they had met often when Deedes was at Smyrna. So, after a pleasant conversation, it was agreed that Deedes should land next day at Urla, if the Vali agreed, though he remarks, "the question of under what guarantees I go seems vague and decidedly Turkish in its sketchiness. I propose going, however, if I get nothing better, on the Vali's good word."

Accordingly, on the evening of March 13th he was landed at Urla by the picket-boat on the understanding that if he did not reappear within twenty-four hours he was not to be expected.<sup>1</sup> He was met by the Vali's car and driven to Smyrna where he spent the night at Rahmi Bey's

<sup>1</sup> He does not mention this in his diary but one of his friends told me.

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residence in friendly conversation, trying to make a bad case appear a good one. The Vali was not taken in; the British position was a weak one and the most that could be hoped for was a saving of face, but the Vali was unsympathetic to the Government of Enver, and that fact, combined, it is fair to surmise, with his liking for Deedes and the knowledge of all that Deedes had done for his people in 1912 and 1913, made him forbear to call the English bluff. The port of Smyrna remained free, as it had been throughout the war, but the forts were not dismantled, either then or at any subsequent time. So on Sunday, March 14th, the neat khaki-clad figure of Deedes reappeared at Urla, having enjoyed the hospitality of the Vali and "the perfectly glorious weather".

On March 15th he returned to Mudros, and that is the last one hears from him of this strange little adventure, in which admiration for his coolness is overshadowed by the delightful touch of fantasy in the picture of a small modest-mannered Englishman attempting to land on enemy territory in order to telephone, under the benign eye of two men who, if chance had not decreed that they should be police officers, would certainly have been brigands; who, moreover, had just experienced an unprovoked bombardment from the guns of English warships.

But this is the last humorous incident to enliven Deedes' diary for many a long day.

Two days after Deedes' return from Smyrna Sir Ian Hamilton<sup>1</sup> reached Mudros (March 17th) with the nucleus of his Staff, and the curtain rises on the drama of the Gallipoli campaign.

In his diary of a few days earlier Deedes had written that there was a general state of complete ignorance as to the situation. But the state of ignorance at Mudros was surpassed by the state of ignorance in the *Phaeton*, which

<sup>1</sup> General Sir Ian Hamilton, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., D.S.O.

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brought Sir Ian Hamilton. It was only on March 12th that Kitchener informed Sir Ian that he was to command the expedition and was to leave London the following day. The previous day, March 11th, Captain Aspinall, an officer in the Establishments Branch of the War Office, was told that Sir Ian was going to the Dardanelles with four Divisions and he was instructed to prepare an estimate of the requirements. In order to understand the formidable nature of the undertaking and the folly of such last-minute instructions I give Captain Aspinall's own account : <sup>1</sup>

"My task", he says, "was to work out special war establishments for Headquarters, land-transport, supply-columns, etc. . . . no one could tell me whether roads in the Gallipoli Peninsula were fit for mechanical transport, or whether there were any roads at all. As regards H.Q., the Chief of the Imperial General Staff told me Kitchener had given orders it was not to include more than about three Staff officers. I drew up an establishment for twenty-three . . . which was duly sanctioned by the necessary 'K' in blue pencil.

"On March 12th I was told work must be finished next day as I was to go with Sir Ian. By dint of sitting up all night, work was finished at 3 P.M. and at 5 P.M. I left London as officer responsible for preparing plans of operations for the consideration of Sir Ian and his Chief of Staff. . . . It was not until our journey began <sup>2</sup> that I was able to ask some questions about the task that lay before us and I shall never forget the dismay and foreboding with which I learnt that, apart from K's very brief instructions, a pre-war Admiralty hand-book on the Dardanelles defences and an out-of-date map, Sir Ian had been given practically no information whatever. Surely we might at least have been shown the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Churchill, *World Crisis*, vol. ii, p. 210.

<sup>2</sup> It was actually in the train between Victoria and Dover, so I was told by Captain Aspinall, now General Aspinall-Oglander.



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Greek plan for an attack on the Peninsula . . . which was apparently in some War Office pigeon-hole on the day we left. . . .”

Even the optimism of Sir Ian Hamilton was shaken when he found, on embarking in the *Phaeton*, that he was minus his Adjutant-General, his Quarter-Master-General and his Chief of Medical Services. He was shown a diagram of the General Staff with half the spaces unfilled even by names. “Q” branch was not yet in being, even on paper, and with a few hurried jottings by his C.G.S., “only 1600 rounds for 4.5 Howitzers. Who is Commander of the R.E.? . . .”, his out-of-date map and a 1912 *Handbook of the Turkish Army*, he began his mission.

In the light of events it is easy to see that no Commander should have taken responsibility for so ill-organized, ill-equipped and inchoate an expedition, but the old British hope of “muddling through” had not yet, in March 1915, been knocked out of our minds by the series of disasters which befell us in 1915 and 1916 or by a knowledge of what modern warfare means, learnt at so terrible a cost of death and suffering. Even Sir Ian, in noting in his diary the facts which have been quoted, concludes with the acid comment, “in matters of administration our way is the way of Colney Hatch”. But his loyalty to the traditions of the old Army and, above all, his personal loyalty to Kitchener were proof even against this knowledge, and he arrived at Mudros prepared to make the best of a bad job.

His first experience of the operations was a disheartening one. The day after his arrival, on March 18th, Admiral de Robeck made a last attempt to force the Straits by unsupported naval action and failed, with the total loss of three battle-ships, two British<sup>1</sup> and one French,<sup>2</sup> and the crippling of two more, one British and one French.<sup>3</sup>

Deedes was a witness of part of this catastrophe, having

<sup>1</sup> *Ocean, Irresistible.*

<sup>2</sup> *Bouvet.*

<sup>3</sup> *Inflexible, Gasparois.*

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been summoned to the *Phaeton* by Sir Ian and told that he and Doughty-Wylie were to work under Colonel Ward in the Intelligence Department and would form part of the Headquarters Staff. The *Phaeton* then put to sea, made a sweep round the Gulf of Saros as far north as Bulayir and then returned to the mouth of the Straits. Here is Deedes' account of what he saw :

" . . . At about 3.30 we entered the Dardanelles and took two sweeps up towards the ships, which we could distinctly see firing and being fired at. Particularly clear were the huge black puffs of smoke over the land, coming we presumed from the *Queen Elizabeth*, whom we saw amongst others. When making our second sweep we received a salvo of shrapnel (where from we could not tell) which fell all around us.

" About this time we saw the *Inflexible* returning from up the Straits and five or six destroyers hurrying towards her. It was remarked that she seemed to be pumping water pretty freely and seemed low in the water, while all her crew seemed to be congregated aft.<sup>1</sup> We shortly afterwards heard that she had struck a mine and at first it was doubtful whether she would hold out or not. We then got ready our boats and stood by with the destroyers. Whilst thus returning to Tenedos we noticed the *Gaulois* away near Rabbit Island — viz. to a short distance north of us — very low in the forepart of the ship and very high aft. It then transpired that she also had struck a mine and was doing her best to get to Rabbit Island where I subsequently believe she was beached.

" Meanwhile, the destroyers suddenly were seen to leave the *Inflexible* and rush off up the Straits again and we now heard that the *Irresistible* was also badly damaged up the Straits and was being dragged out. As to her subsequent

<sup>1</sup> " With the ship's company in life-jackets, ready to swim. *Inflexible* got back to Malta, steaming stern first all the way."—Note by General Dawnay.

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fate we have heard nothing yet.<sup>1</sup> A further rumour stated that a second French ship had been struck!<sup>2</sup> Having accompanied the *Inflexible* safely into Tenedos we returned home to Mudros at about 25 knots, doing the distance in under two hours. . . .”

He concludes his account with the curiously laconic statement, “. . . got dinner about 8.30, after an interesting though somewhat unfortunate day — being Admiral de Robeck’s first day, particularly unfortunate”.

From this entry it seems that Deedes failed to appreciate the magnitude of the disaster, though allowance must be made for his habit, not uncommon among Englishmen, of consistent understatement. But the loss of five capital ships, without achieving the success of the operation in which they were engaged, shook the nerves of the Admiralty and even more of the naval officers on the spot. Moreover, all these ships were lost through striking mines and not by gun-fire, for though the entrance to the Straits had been swept the previous night<sup>3</sup> the available sweepers and trawlers had not acquired that measure of efficiency which the hard lessons of the war later taught them and the bay of Erenköy had not been swept at all, a reconnoitring aeroplane having failed to spot mines at the depth at which they lay and reporting that the bay was clear of them. This heavy loss from mines probably distressed the naval officers far more than if it had been suffered from direct enemy action, and de Robeck was emphatically of the opinion that it was impossible for ships to force the Straits without supporting troops. Churchill, still at the Admiralty, urged that the attack should be renewed since time was on the side of the Germans, allowing

<sup>1</sup> The *Irresistible* foundered.

<sup>2</sup> The *Bouvet*. Her magazine exploded and she sank in two minutes, with the loss of 600 men.

<sup>3</sup> “The mines were said to be floating mines, so that when the sweeping operations had been thought to be completed, more mines continued to float down the current.”—Note by General Dawnay.

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them to send submarines to the Aegean, but the War Cabinet would not overrule the opinion of Admiral de Robeck and this was the last attempt at unsupported naval action. It is, however, worth recording that the German Higher Command considered that had the British resumed the naval attack on March 19th and pressed it regardless of loss, they must have reached Constantinople.<sup>1</sup>

Five days later Sir Ian transferred his H.Q. to Alexandria to begin preparations for a landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula. H.Q. was thus set up at a great distance from the theatre of operations, but the move was made necessary by the unhappy fact that, though the 29th Division was ordered abroad on March 10th, the first contingent did not sail till March 16th owing to the dispersal of the transport vessels, and the whole Division was packed pell-mell in the ships, guns in the hold of one, ammunition or medical stores in another, harness, clothing and other equipment inextricably mixed. It was therefore necessary to disembark, sort out and re-embark the whole Division, and for this formidable task the harbour at Lemnos was quite inadequate. Further, the Royal Naval Division and the bulk of the Australian and New Zealand forces were still in Egypt.

Deedes, of course, went with the Staff, and by March 29th was housed in Colonel Ward's Department and very busy, co-ordinating the information already collected in Cairo as to the strength and disposition of the Turkish forces. His diary for the next month makes unhappy reading, showing as it does the background of confusion and uncertainty against which the plans for the invasion of the Peninsula took shape. To begin with, there was confusion of command in Egypt. Sir Ian, at Alexandria, was responsible for the large Expeditionary Force, but he was working in territory of which General Sir John Maxwell<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Morgenthau, U.S.A. Minister at Constantinople, was of the same opinion.

<sup>2</sup> Major-General Sir John Maxwell, K.C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O., D.S.O.

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was in command, with the duty of assuring the security of Egypt against any Turkish attack on the Canal and against hostile action from the Senussi tribes, in the Western Desert. Maxwell was therefore holding Egypt on two fronts, and the safety of the Canal was his major preoccupation for the next eighteen months and contributed largely to the *non-possumus* attitude with which he later met appeals for reinforcements from Egypt to Gallipoli. There was at the same time a British Civil Administration in Egypt under a High Commissioner, Sir Henry McMahon, while the Sudan was separately administered by the Sirdar, Sir Reginald Wingate.

There were therefore two separate military commands, a fleet under the direct orders of the Admiralty, and a civil administration receiving its orders from the Foreign Office, as well as a host of visiting diplomats, neutral and belligerent, from the Near Eastern capitals. The wonder is not that confusion prevailed but that there was not absolute chaos.<sup>1</sup>

One incident recorded by Deedes gives an illuminating instance of the stupid and disastrous lack of co-operation between the Foreign Office and the War Office, which was not eased by the attitude of the men on the spot.

Sir Thomas Cunningham, Military Attaché at Athens, was sent by Sir Francis Eliot, the Ambassador, to see Sir Ian Hamilton and to learn something of the British projects with regard to the attack on the Dardanelles and Constantinople. The relations of Great Britain with Greece were peculiarly difficult: Venezélos was strongly pro-British and on March 1st had offered the British Government a Greek Army Corps to fight in Gallipoli, but there was a powerful pro-German party to which the King was thought to incline, and the King, as well as many Greeks of all

<sup>1</sup> The co-ordination of the Navy, Army and Air Force in the operations against the Italians in Libya provides a good augury that we have profited by some of our mistakes in the last war.

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parties, had been bitterly affronted by the Russian refusal to allow any Greek troops to enter Constantinople, even if they helped in its conquest. In such circumstances the position of the British Ambassador was not an easy one and he had to reckon also with the mutual fears and jealousies which thickened the atmosphere between Greece and Bulgaria — Bulgaria at that time being still neutral and a potentially valuable ally to the British for the Gallipoli adventure.

Deedes had a long talk with Sir Thomas Cunningham, a "heart-to-heart" talk in a box at the Opera during a performance of *La Tosca*, and he writes, "He, in Athens, had been kept in complete ignorance as to the military operations. We, on the other hand, were in total ignorance of the political situation . . . the lack of co-operation to my mind between the F.O. and W.O., political and military sides of the question, is another example of the curious manner in which the whole business has been conducted. . . ."

Curious, indeed! But the hiatus between the Foreign Office and the War Office might have been bridged if Sir Ian and the Senior members of his Staff had had the vision necessary to perceive the whole of the Near East as the theatre of war, and the intellectual and moral resilience sufficient to break the red tape in which they had been swaddled since they first entered the Army. That they had not, Deedes' next entry (March 31st) makes only too clear:

"Cunningham went back to Athens, rather disgusted. He had come . . . to find out what our military operations were to consist of in order to be able to tell Sir Francis Eliot, to facilitate him in his negotiations with the Greeks, not of course expecting or wishing to be told the plan of campaign, but in order to be able to form some idea of the force engaged and the rough intentions. . . . But on asking the C.G.S. and Sir Ian if they had any communication to make to Sir Francis Eliot *he received the reply that they had none such.*

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So, I suppose, we shall now get a continuation of the state of affairs in which Athens, acting under the F.O. and a certain amount on its own, if any, arranging the political side of the question: Sir Ian here making his military preparations, the two being done in water-tight compartments!"

The lack of co-operation between the members of the Expeditionary Force itself and their mutual distrust also becomes apparent in this same incident. Cunningham, "being a man of some parts" and not a little angry at his treatment by Sir Ian and General Braithwaite,<sup>1</sup> did not stop at airing his grievances to Deedes, who then, as now, was a model of discretion, an absolute safe-deposit of everyone's opinions and criticisms, but he aired them also to General Hunter-Weston, the Commander of the 29th Division. Now Hunter-Weston,<sup>2</sup> as all who knew him testify, was intelligent, forceful, not a model of tact and no great respecter of persons. He asked Colonel Ward, Chief Intelligence Officer, to show him Cunningham's appreciation of the situation prepared for Sir Ian, and this Ward reported to the C.G.S., who said, "Certainly not . . . it's not his job and he shan't see it."

Even Deedes found himself involved in this atmosphere of pedantry and suspicion.

Hunter-Weston, after his talk with Cunningham, came to the conclusion that a landing of the Expeditionary Force near the Bulgarian frontier, between the Gulf of Enos and Bulayir, would turn the current of Bulgarian opinion in favour of the Entente and induce Bulgarian troops to march with the British and French. He therefore asked Deedes to collect for him all available information about the nature of the country, but told Deedes that he was on no account

<sup>1</sup> General Sir Walter Braithwaite, G.C.B., Bath King of Arms, C.G.S. Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

<sup>2</sup> Lieut.-General Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston, K.C.B., D.S.O.

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to say that he had been asked for the information. But Deedes, though an unusually silent, is a very truthful person, and that same afternoon, being asked by the C.G.S. for certain information on the same subject, inadvertently replied that he was in process of looking it up. "For whom are you looking that up?" asked the C.G.S., and then it all came out; Deedes got a smart rap over the knuckles and was told that he would kindly remember that he was not to give Hunter-Weston information on that or any other subject and he was to say those were his orders.

"The first little rift within the flute", says Deedes quaintly, but indeed it was more than a little rift, and these old and petty wrangles and animosities would not have been worth recording save that they give the atmosphere in which an intricate and hazardous enterprise was prepared and help to a fuller understanding of the reasons why, with so many difficulties overcome, so much gallantry displayed, it was never crowned with success.



## *Chapter Eleven*

IN this diary of the campaign in Gallipoli there are few of those sketches, humorous or picturesque, which enliven the records of Tripoli and Anatolia, and later, in Cairo, of the preparations for the Arab rising. Deedes was too busy as a rule to do more than jot down the events of the day as they occurred, with an occasional comment or criticism and now and again the brief flash of a remark on the weather, its dust and discomfort, or the beauty of the spring flowers on the Peninsula. Much of the diary was written — in pencil, in a child's penny exercise-book — under conditions of personal danger; nearly all of it under a burden of anxiety and apprehension which grew ever weightier as the grim drama unfolded. None the less it is a document of great interest, because it is in very truth the account of an eye-witness, set down in plain unvarnished language within a few days, sometimes a few hours, of the events described, and handed over to the writer of this book as it stands, without alteration or suppression. Inevitably, therefore, there are errors of judgment and criticisms which he would now allow to be unfair because he could not know the whole of the relevant factors in the situation, but these are astonishingly few, and in reading the whole long record, which runs to a hundred and forty-five pages of typescript, one is greatly impressed by the clarity of his outlook and the prescience with which he saw the trend of events. A further factor which gives interest to this diary is that it is a "back-stage" view of this tremendous drama. Deedes

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was at this time only thirty-two, a Staff Captain doing important work in the Intelligence Department of the Expedition, but not taken into the inner councils where the arguments for and against certain courses of action were discussed and the main lines of strategy laid down. But he heard a great deal — from Captain Aspinall, from Captain Guy Dawnay, both on the Headquarters Staff; from commanders with a livelier sense of realities than the C.-in-C., like General Hunter-Weston; from the French officers, to whom he was able to talk in their own language; from diplomatic visitors like Sir Thomas Cunningham and Ralph Glyn — and the record of these conversations, together with his own observance of many incidents, small or great, builds up a picture of the uneasiness, the divided counsels, the hesitancy and the lack of co-operation which, from the beginning, stirred uneasily behind the fair façade of the official reports. He notes, for example, that when the Military Attaché from Sofia “turned up”, his first words to Deedes were “a total lack of co-operation between the political and military sides”, and Deedes adds, “the very thing I have been saying for weeks. . . . I can’t help thinking Fitzmaurice [the Military Attaché] thinks we are taking on our task with too small a force and would prefer to see the diplomatic situation develop before the military move comes off.” This is dated April 15th, and there is a further illuminating note on April 17th concerning Colonel Napier, who had also “turned up”, from Dedeagaç.<sup>1</sup> Colonel Napier, like Fitzmaurice and Hunter-Weston, was of the opinion that a landing near the Bulgarian frontier, especially if it scored an initial success, would bring in the Bulgarians as allies and induce them to use their considerable army against the Turks at Kashan, but Sir Ian refused to send a telegram to Lord Kitchener embodying this proposal and the reasons for it, saying that “firstly his hands were

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Napier was Military Attaché at Sofia.

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tied by Lord K. to the Peninsula attack, and secondly that he could not pass on the advice of a Military Attaché . . . to Lord K. — that Lord K. himself must be fully aware of the diplomatic situation. . . .” So disturbed, however, were certain members of Sir Ian’s Staff by this combination of pedantry and obstinate loyalty that Doughty-Wylie wrote out a telegram to FitzGerald at the Foreign Office, and gave it to Colonel Napier for dispatch from Dedeağaç. It ran, “ Attaché Sofia has sent important wire to F.O. ; most necessary that Lord K. should see this ” . . . and Doughty-Wylie hoped thereby to save the communication from a pigeon-hole. Deedes sums up the whole situation in a brief sentence : “ A curious state of affairs, but shows clearly the feeling of apprehension and to a certain extent of indecision which was beginning to make itself felt amongst the Staff and leading members of the Expedition. . . .”

Apprehension and indecision ! Bad factors with which to begin a dangerous undertaking, but the die was cast, Sir Ian had transferred his Staff to the island of Lemnos, where the 29th Division, the Royal Naval Division and the Anzacs had already been disembarked, and the whole complicated machinery of an amphibian expedition was beginning to revolve.

Under the date of April 19th, Deedes attempts one of the few conscious pen-pictures which enliven the crabbed and crowded pages of his diary.

“ This is a good juncture”, he writes, “ at which to give some description of the scene in the harbour of Mudros, a sight that I suppose never has been and possibly never will be seen again. The Harbour, a large one at that, is absolutely full of battleships, transports, supply-ships and colliers. In the first [category] are of course included submarines, destroyers, etc. . . . All these ships lying close to one another and packed with soldiers, horses, guns, transport and every possible thing required for an Expedi-

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tionary Force of this nature. The scene in the harbour is one of continued daily and nightly activity — picket-boats, motor-boats, rowing-boats dashing all day long from one transport or one Battleship to another. On every ship signallers hard at work sending through the stream of messages, orders, etc., that have to be communicated from one ship to another. All the transports are numbered; 'A' for the Australian and New Zealand Corps transports; 'N' for Naval; 'B' for the 29th Division. Birdwood has his Army H.Q. on the *Minnewaska*. . . . The Vice-Admiral de Robeck is of course on the *Queen Elizabeth* — the Governor of Mudros! Admiral Wemyss on the *Hussar*; Sir Ian and G.H.Q. are on the *Arcadian*. The *Arcadian* is of course the centre of this huge ant-hill of activity.

"A continual procession of steam-pinnaces bearing Admirals, captains, commanders and other naval officers, bringing Divisional and other Army commanders on board to see Sir Ian, bringing the French General d'Amade and his Staff and the French Admiral — in a word, all sorts and conditions. The ship too is chock-a-block of officers — the French liaison officers, our own Naval liaison officers detailed by Admiral de Robeck to keep touch between Army and Navy — then the G.H.Q. Staff itself, now huge: Intelligence at one end of the ship in a large office — the G.S. co-operation department in another — the whole of the saloon handed over to the Daa and Gub G. Department — another saloon to the Naval transport officers — the ship's real dining-room, a very large saloon on the Second Deck, given over to a swarm of clerks who type the whole day without cessation, so it would seem.

"On land, again, a camp and hospital have been established and the French have a considerable number of troops under canvas. The dirty little town of Mudros as I saw it two months ago now bears a busy military aspect, very clean and full of new shops, stores and booths, with

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Greeks busy selling things to the troops. . . .”

Those Greeks who were so busy selling things to the troops were very much Deedes' concern. He, with Doughty-Wylie, had been attached to the Headquarters Staff, under Colonel Ward, Chief of the Intelligence Department, but the Intelligence work was reorganized in the middle of April and Deedes was given a section of his own, I(B), whose function was to deal with spies, guides and interpreters. I(A), which was under Doughty-Wylie, with George Lloyd attached to him, had the task of dealing with counter-espionage, and the friendship between these men was a good augury of close co-operation between these two halves of the Intelligence service. Deedes was peculiarly well-fitted for this work by his knowledge of Turkish, of conditions within the Ottoman Empire and of the state of mind of the non-Turkish minorities (except the Arabs, with whom he was less well acquainted) and by his capacity for weighing up men. He is a rare example of an idealist who is very difficult to take in; he has a cold and penetrating eye which can perceive the flaw in a man's character behind the most skilful screen of words, and the essential kindliness which characterizes his general dealings with his fellow-men conceals a dispassionate judgment which would perhaps astonish those who find him so sympathetic in everyday intercourse. He had need of these qualities in his work in Gallipoli; out of the crowd of mixed Levantines who presented themselves, anxious to draw British pay, he had to decide which could be trusted to carry out their duties as guides, which were already enemy spies looking for information and which were merely stupid and talkative fellows likely to tell their friends more about their own movements than was advisable. There are many entries in the diary of the next few months dealing with the anxieties and preoccupations of this work which will be dealt with in due course.

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But all this activity of which Deedes writes, in Alexandria, as at Mudros, was to culminate on April 25th, the day of the landing on the Peninsula.

Familiar as is the story of the campaign in Gallipoli, it is necessary to give a very brief description of the terrain over which the fighting took place and of the plans for the opening phases of the campaign, in order to understand Deedes' diary, its allusions, comments and criticisms.

Hamilton had before him a very dangerous and difficult task ; he had to land troops under fire on open beaches of country which was imperfectly known and could not, in the state of the Air Arm at that period, be adequately surveyed. He had not only to land his troops but he had, with the help of the Navy, to feed and water them, supply them with munitions and evacuate his casualties from his base at Mudros fifty miles away. He had under his command 80,000 men but, with the exception of the Indian Brigade and the 29th Division, most of his men were untried soldiers. Magnificent as was the physique and appearance of the Australian and New Zealand troops, they had never been under fire and were an unknown quantity, while their first experience of warfare was to be in an operation which must test the quality of the most seasoned troops. Hamilton surmised that he had against him a force of anything between 40,000 to 80,000 Turks under the leadership of a first-class German general ; he did not know where they were awaiting him, nor what their strength in heavy artillery, nor how accurate their fire.<sup>1</sup> There was a possibility that the lighters containing his men might be blown out of the water before reaching the beaches.

There was a choice of four possible landing-places before Hamilton : the Asiatic shore ; Bulayir, in the Gulf of Saros, on the north of the Peninsula ; Enos, near the Bulgarian

<sup>1</sup> Actually, the Turks on the Peninsula numbered 60,000. At this time Intelligence had not yet succeeded in getting accurate information.

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frontier ; and the tip of the Peninsula, around Cape Helles. Asia offered the easiest landing and the opportunity of manœuvring large bodies of troops, but was ruled out by Kitchener, who feared that he had a sufficiency neither of men nor of transport for an extensive campaign in the difficult country in the interior of Anatolia. Bulayir offered one very great advantage, for at that point the isthmus is only three and a half miles in breadth, and could the British have seized the high ground between it and the Sea of Marmora they could have cut all communication between Constantinople and the Turks on the Peninsula. But to offset this there were grave disadvantages ; the transports would have had to lie a mile out and the beach and anchorage would have been under fire from the main Turkish defences. Alternatively, the assaulting army might have been landed at Enos, on the mainland, south of Dedeağaç, but in that case the base at Mudros would have been more than sixty miles away, and the Admiral had informed Sir Ian that he had not sufficient small craft at his disposal to keep open these long lines of communication. Moreover, Enos was close to the Bulgarian frontier and the attitude of the Bulgarian Government was by no means as certain as the British Military Attaché seemed to think ; should the attack on the Peninsula prove a failure, or merely inconclusive, Bulgaria might well make common cause with the Turks, when the British force at Enos would find itself in a most precarious position.

The third plan, of landing at the tip of the Peninsula, had perforce to be adopted. The arrangements were elaborately and most carefully worked out, and in view of the meagre knowledge of the terrain available to the Expeditionary Force and the paucity and badness of maps, one is impressed, reading the story in detail, by the foresight and courage of those who planned the landing and saddened by the ill-luck which shadowed their efforts. Seven

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simultaneous landings were projected : a French force at Kumkale, on the Asiatic shore (near the ruins of Troy), in order to prevent the Turks from bringing their heavy artillery into play to harass the landing parties on the Cape, across that narrow strip of water ; the Australian and New Zealand troops at Gaba Tepe, where the Peninsula narrowed to a breadth of six and a half miles between this point and Maidos, on the south ; and the 29th Division at five beaches around Cape Helles, named S, V, W, X and Y, the principal landing being at V beach, in the neighbourhood of the ruined fort of Seddülbahir. The Royal Naval Division, supported by three warships and two destroyers, was to make a demonstration off Bulayir to prevent the Turks from dispatching too many troops from there to other parts of the Peninsula.

The French gained their objective at Kumkale ; the landing parties established themselves at S, Y and X beaches without casualties, but at Y beach only two battalions of marines had been landed, and these, in view of the serious position at V beach, were withdrawn on the 26th of April. The landing at V beach was hard-fought and costly ; the preliminary naval bombardment failed to destroy the Turkish trenches and barbed-wire entanglements, while a stiff breeze, combined with the strong current, disorganized the gangway which was to have been formed from the *River Clyde* (an old paddle-steamer) to the shore, by a steam-hopper towing a line of barges. The steam-hopper swung to port and stranded broadside on to the beach, and it was due only to the heroism of all taking part, officers and men, that any of the landing-party reached the shore at all. The Turks were only two companies strong but they were in fortified positions and could at will rake the ranks of the British, who were defenceless during debarkation. In spite of very heavy casualties they got ashore and found cover under the lip of the beach, momentarily out of reach



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of the Turkish guns and protected by Commander Josiah Wedgwood's armoured car squadron, mounted in the bows of the *River Clyde*.

At W beach also the casualties were very heavy. The Turks held strongly fortified trenches on the high ground, with redoubts and barbed wire among the sand-dunes ; in consequence, although the British managed to dislodge them and to gain the high ground, they suffered severely, the losses among the senior officers being particularly serious.

The Anzacs had bad luck. They were to have landed at Gaba Tepe in the dark and without artillery preparation, but in the moonless night the leading boat missed its way and fetched up in a small bay called Ari Burnu, later to be famous as Anzac Cove. The Anzacs therefore missed their direction and, instead of advancing at once on to the high ground between Gaba Tepe and Maidos, were involved in exceedingly difficult and broken country of steep scrub-covered ravines. Here they fought the Turks hand to hand, and if individual prowess could have established them in the key position they would have won it, though by the morning of the 25th April the Turks had thrown in all their available reinforcements. But the initial error could not be rectified and for the remainder of those long months of the campaign the Anzacs were penned in a narrow strip of country about one and a half miles in extent, a country largely waterless, so that for many weeks every pint of water for man, horse and mule had to be brought from Egypt (at a cost of from 4d. to 6d. a gallon) and landed on a beach open to Turkish fire.

Deedes saw something of the operations from *Queen Elizabeth*. As she steamed up to Tenedos on that first day she missed a floating mine by about twenty feet, and one cannot help speculating as to what might have happened and how far the whole course of the campaign in the Near

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East might have been altered if the Commander-in-Chief and the major portion of his Staff had been blown to the winds at the outset !

“ On the 25th April we started off Gaba Tepe ”, Deedes writes, “ guarding the debarkment of the Anzac Corps — they had 800 off at 8 A.M., 2000 at 3 P.M. Finding they were doing well we came down to Cape Helles and spent all day shelling the Seddülbahir position in front of the Wooden Horse.<sup>1</sup> By night there had been no progress on this side at all, except at Morto Bay and ‘ W ’ Beach, and the position of the Australians at Gaba Tepe didn’t sound rosy. Having started very finely scaling the heights of Gaba Tepe it appears that in the evening many of them started going back to the Beach instead of remaining in their positions. Birdwood therefore sent a rather alarming wire in the middle of the night saying he had no control over them. However, as it afterwards transpired, he probably rather exaggerated. All that had happened was that the men, having naturally little discipline, had got mixed up and away from their officers, had had a long day, were hungry and thought they would like to return to the Beach — the next day, however, they fought just as well. . . . ”

In this passage Deedes does less than justice both to Birdwood and the Anzacs, because he was unaware of the initial error in the place of landing, of the desperately difficult nature of the country and of the heavy casualties among the dispersed and scattered units in hand-to-hand fighting with the Turks.<sup>2</sup> But I have quoted it as an interesting example of the difficulty of knowing, even at G.H.Q., the real position while fighting is in progress.

Later in the same entry Deedes repaired his initial

<sup>1</sup> I.e. *River Clyde*.

<sup>2</sup> Note by General Dawnay : “ It was too much to ask of troops, inexperienced, not professional and only partially trained — however gallant and quick to learn. Highly trained regular troops might have succeeded — we all thought they would have done so. (The Anzacs soon became ‘ regular ’ enough ! ) ”

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criticism by writing that "the A. and N. did wonders . . . they say they rushed up the slopes of Sari Bair like goats . . . and at the end of five days' fighting they had a strong and very well-consolidated position on the side of Sari Bair, with the flanks on the water both sides and well able to advance when necessary — their position there . . . was exactly as it was meant to be strategically."

That was written on May 2nd, but General Aspinall-Oglander, summing up the situation in the official history of the war, judges very differently.

"The minute scrap of territory", he writes, "which the Anzac corps had captured and which was to be its home for the next three months, had a total length of rather less than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles. Its greatest depth from the front line to the sea coast was only 1000 yards. . . . Its sea-base, only a thousand yards from the trenches, was the open beach, exposed to north-west and south-west winds. Its anchorage was under direct hostile observation from the coast on either flank. . . . The moral and material advantages enjoyed by the Turks were those of a man looking down from the top of a cliff at his adversary clinging to a precarious ledge below him. The Turks had all the country in rear to rest in, or to fall back on if forced to retire. The invaders had nothing behind them but the open beach and the sea. That the Australian and New Zealand troops never relinquished their grasp; that they made this apparently hopeless position impregnable; that after waiting three months for reinforcements they attacked, and attacked again, and very nearly won, is a story that will live for ever."<sup>1</sup>

On May 2nd, in spite of the very heavy casualties — equivalent to about a division — there was a general spirit of optimism at headquarters which is reflected in Deedes' notes. The landing had been effected in spite of great losses, the troops were ashore and entrenched, the transport

<sup>1</sup> *Military Operations — Gallipoli*, vol. i, p. 299. (Aspinall-Oglander.)

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services had not been broken up nor the whole expedition blown into the sea, as many of those planning the assault on Gallipoli had feared. True, the objectives of Krithia and Acibaba, the first of which it had been hoped to reach on the day of landing, had not, after a week's hard fighting, been attained, and the camps on W and V beaches were within the range of Turkish howitzers on Acibaba and the Asiatic shore. The French had been recalled from the Asiatic shore to Gallipoli on the night of the 26th-27th April because of the hazardous position of the Anzacs and the troops at Cape Helles, and of this decision Deedes writes, under the date May 1st, ". . . it is now very obvious to everyone that the French should never have been brought over from the Asiatic shore . . . for on their first day they achieved very signal success, taking Kumkale . . . and 500 prisoners and it is now established beyond doubt that another 2000 Turks were ready to surrender on that day, demoralized no doubt by the first day's operations. . . . It is now regretted by all, and Dawnay and myself are trying to urge a return to the Asiatic shore. . . . As it was, however, I think on the evening of the second day, the position at this end of Cape Helles, with the fear of a Turkish counter-attack . . . induced Sir Ian to take a certainly unwise step, not considering its after effects, and withdraw the French from the Asiatic shore."

General Dawnay says that, in passing this judgment, Deedes was wrong. The original plan provided always for the French move from the Asiatic shore after the landing and, though the howitzers at Acibaba were to be a thorn in the flesh to the troops on Cape Helles, Dawnay did not favour a return to Asia.

Nevertheless, both he and Deedes, even at this early date of May 2nd, perceived the imminence of trench warfare similar to that which had gripped the Western

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Front, which it was the main object of the campaign in Gallipoli to break.

"I am now with Dawnay", runs the diary, "trying to avoid what I can see every sign of being likely to happen. We are piling in more troops on the Peninsula, the Turks ditto.<sup>1</sup> Everyone is digging and as far as I can see we are in a fair way to recommence trench warfare in Turkey. Meanwhile, our having no *divertissement* elsewhere (if only a feint) is having the effect of bringing all available Turkish reinforcements to the Peninsula. Dawnay and I are trying to get them (*i.e.* G.H.Q.) to appreciate this and accept some scheme by which we should make a feint landing at Çeşme (opposite Smyrna), sending a lot of transports down there, or any other scheme to take attention away from here."

By the curious word "*divertissement*" Deedes meant one of the many plans which were constantly being put forward by the Intelligence officers for using bodies of men disaffected to the Turkish Government as irregular troops, away from the main theatre of war. There were many Greeks, Cretans, Albanians and Arabs who had no love for Turkish rule, and a certain number also of Turks who had suffered under Enver and Talaat or had some grievance against the Committee of Union and Progress. The Intelligence officers considered that if they were armed and dispatched to raid lines of communication or to make active forays behind the Turkish main positions they would have a high "nuisance value", by creating confusion and keeping a proportion of the Turkish forces from concentration against the British.

As early as April 2nd, Doughty-Wylie had proposed that a small band of Greek irregulars should be landed in Anatolia to demolish the railway bridge between Balıkesir and Aziziye, on the main line that runs from the Sea of

<sup>1</sup> Liman von Sanders was no longer under the necessity of keeping large forces at Bulayir or in Asia.

Marmora, south to Smyrna and thence to Aydin. This project was not taken up by the H.Q. Staff, but Deedes, undeterred, poured forth suggestions, based on an intimate knowledge of the lack of organization which then marked Turkish administration and of the inefficiency or apathy of many of the Turkish governors. Among the suggestions were the following : that a band of Greek deserters should be landed north of the Gulf of Enos, to cut the Turkish communications ; that fifteen hundred Greek irregulars should be sent from Tenedos to the Anatolian coast, near Ayvalik, to capture Edremit, south of Kumkale ; that a small party should be landed on the Peninsula, between Gaba Tepe and Cape Helles, to get behind the Turkish lines at Krithia — a somewhat desperate enterprise, it must be confessed ; that an “ exploration party ” of twenty-four should land at Çanakkale to spy out the strength of the Turkish forces at Kumkale ; and finally, that there should be a demonstration in force at Çeşme.

Deedes knew the nature of the Anatolian country, having ridden, walked or bicycled over most of it ; he also knew the Turks of Anatolia, their courage, their hardiness and the misgovernment from which they suffered. But the Greek “ irregulars ” were an unknown factor ; some indeed might be patriots, but some might well be brigands out of work, Turkish agents drawing pay from both sides, or just merely bad characters. The proposal for the attempted capture of Edremit was rejected for political reasons, since the employment of so large a body of Greeks would commit the Entente Powers to regarding the Greeks definitely as allies and according them treatment as allies. This, in the delicate balance of Balkan psychology, was almost certain to tip the scale for the Bulgarians in favour of Germany. The proposal for a demonstration at Çeşme was dismissed since, in order to be effective, a force of British or French troops would have to be employed and these

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could in no wise be spared. Several of the schemes came to nothing because, when they were mooted, the Greeks flatly refused to land in Anatolia, and Deedes' proposal to use Turkish deserters<sup>1</sup> — surely a hazardous course! — was rejected.

However, he ultimately had his "*divertisement*". At the beginning of June the expedition to Kumkale was organized by Colonel Fiennes, though not without its difficulties. Under the date of June 3rd Deedes writes: "In the morning Colonel Fiennes returned from Tenedos at 9 A.M. in the sweeper I had got him for a week, saying that he had unfortunately been unable to get the Greek band off the preceding night because, just when all was ready to start, the men declared they must have bandoliers to put their cartridges in, and secondly, all the clothing we had sent them (Khaki) was, they said, for missions. Fiennes therefore had to postpone the expedition for that night and return here for bandoliers and fresh clothing. This I procured him and he left again at 2 P.M. with Binns, whom I had procured from the Royal Naval Division and mean in future to keep by me here. . . ."

He adds later that the expedition "was not altogether successful", though it did disclose the fact that the coast was guarded all the way from the point opposite Tenedos northward to Kumkale. But one would have liked to be a witness of the scene when Colonel Fiennes was faced with his two dozen Greek irregulars — trained, one imagines, in the school of brigandage and smuggling — and found them quite willing to risk their necks in a raid on a Turkish signal station, but with a nice particularity on the question of costume.

Finally, in August, during the opening phases of the battle of Suvla Bay, Deedes was allowed to try out one of

<sup>1</sup> Deserters from the Turkish Army were mainly, I gather from Deedes' diary, Christians and Arabs, though a few were political opponents of Enver.

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his more ambitious projects. The entry is dated August 14th and runs : " At Karachali, north of the Gulf of Enos, I had my landing ! The French gave us three hundred and fifty of their irregular Cretan 'civvies', who were sent up in the *Leda* and *Minerva* to disembark at the northern point of the Gulf of Saros, go inland, try and cut the Turkish lines of communications along the road between Keshan and Kavak. In point of fact they did not succeed in doing this, but landed, drew a biggish Turkish force against them and re-embarked under heavy fire again ; having thus partially obtained their objective. They were stated in the Turkish papers to have been a real force that had landed and was driven back. . . . "

Inconclusive as these small expeditions were, and little as they affected the course of the struggle for the Peninsula, they were an adumbration, and in some ways a rehearsal, for the railway raids made by the Arabs during the Palestine campaign. Those later raids had the inestimable advantage of being led by such men as Lawrence, Garland and Newcombe, and of being carried out by naturally mobile forces inspired by a fervent spirit of patriotism. But the idea of such guerilla tactics had taken shape twelve months earlier in the fertile minds of Deedes and a group of the brilliant and original young men who surrounded Sir Ian Hamilton during the ill-fated campaign in Gallipoli, and who strove to break through the impalpable barriers of orthodox strategy and to retrieve a situation of which, from the first, they had been gravely apprehensive.



## *Chapter Twelve*

FOR all those in a position to survey the whole field of the operations there was ground enough for apprehension, even by the middle of May.

By the evening of April 26th the Anzacs had gallantly fulfilled Sir Ian Hamilton's urgent command to "dig in and stick it out"; V, W and X beaches were held in a continuous arc, with a single battalion making a junction at S beach, but the casualties were serious, the position on the beaches was cramped and precarious, while the main objective, the massif of Acibaba, was still in Turkish hands, dominating the British positions. On April 28th the 29th Division, supported by the French on their right, attacked again towards Krithia but were driven back with heavy loss by the Turks — the Worcesters lost all but three hundred men — and, as Deedes writes, "That night therefore was a very anxious one and had the Turks made a counter-attack by night or the next morning, I think it would have been very serious".

On May 2nd and 3rd, the Turks did counter-attack, but were stubbornly held off, and on May 6th Hamilton ordered a general attack in an attempt to gain Acibaba, the key of the whole position at Cape Helles. The fighting was very bitter and the Allied troops entered it as tired men; of the 88th Brigade, for instance, which attacked in the centre of the line, not a man had had a proper night's sleep since they landed, a fortnight earlier. The battle raged until May 8th, when it ceased because both sides were fought to

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a standstill. The results were bitterly disappointing for the Allies ; a few hundred yards of trenches had been won and lost and won again, but at the end they were no nearer Acibaba, while the British had lost fifteen thousand men and the French four thousand. The casualties among officers of all ranks had been particularly severe and the French colonial troops, indeed, had lost so many of their European officers that General d'Amade considered them no longer effective. The Turks also had suffered heavily, but they still held the heights and their tired troops were being reinforced by fresh battalions, two of which had probably come from Constantinople. This fact was ascertained by Deedes from his interrogation of Turkish prisoners, among whom he found five or six of the officers who had known him in Tripoli. They talked very openly to him, as did other prisoners, and he writes that they " displayed a manifest dislike to the war " and no animosity towards the British, indeed they were critical of their German officers, who made them adopt the close formation tactics (dominating the German military mind at the beginning of the last war) which they disliked intensely. These tactics also accounted for their very heavy casualties.

Sir Ian could draw what comfort he might from these reports, and he had need of it, for from Deedes' notes it appears that an atmosphere of discouragement was beginning to form around G.H.Q. ; in spite of their heavy casualties they had failed in their attack, they were haunted by a shortage of ammunition which was to be their recurrent nightmare throughout the campaign, and they had no troops in reserve.

It is at this point that begin Deedes' entries on "*divertissements*". At this point also that there come into the pages of his diary the figures of three very remarkable young men with whom he was to be closely associated throughout the whole course of the campaign. They were Captain

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Guy Dawnay,<sup>1</sup> afterwards Deputy C.G.S. to Allenby in Palestine ; Lieutenant-Colonel Aspinall,<sup>2</sup> of the Establishments branch ; and Captain George Lloyd,<sup>3</sup> serving in the I(A) section of Intelligence. Their gifts were very diverse ; in Dawnay an extreme intellectual clarity was combined with a sensitive and highly-strung temperament ; in Lloyd there was a warm imaginative quality which was of the whole personality rather than of the mind alone ; Colonel Aspinall had that vein of poetry which is so unexpected — and by no means so uncommon — in professional soldiers and which threw into relief the moving and tragic nature of the events in which he took part, viewed in the light of history and against a background which is one of the most significant in the world. Deedes, the fourth of this gallant company, is the most baffling personality of all ; he alone of the four has not followed to its climax the career that seemed so clearly marked out by his gifts, and while his three companions have achieved positions of honour, or of brilliance, or of wealth in the world of men, he has been content to find his life's work in the committee rooms of social organizations and his home among the network of mean streets in Bethnal Green.

But these four men, so diverse and so brilliant, who came together in 1915, had several things in common : their youth, their ability to perceive the wide issues beyond the tangled daily complexities and their absolute fearlessness in challenging authority on questions which they thought vital. Critical they were, but they were not disloyal ; they were concerned only to convey the truth about actual events, but they felt that the disaster of Suvla Bay imposed on them a duty towards England greater than could be claimed by any individual, however much honoured ; and

<sup>1</sup> Now Major-General Guy Dawnay, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

<sup>2</sup> Now Brigadier-General C. F. Aspinall-Oglander, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

<sup>3</sup> The late Lord Lloyd of Dolobran, G.C.S.I., D.S.O.

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they therefore acted. As, after the opening phases, the situation worsened from day to day, they talked together, at Imbros, on W beach, walking among the flowers round the ruined walls of Seddülbahir in the brief spring, and a picture forms itself from the scattered and casual references in Deedes' diary, the picture of a gallant youthful band, linked together by mutual liking and their common knowledge of impending doom, and challenging the old order of things, whether in war or peace — the Three Musketeers, perhaps, with Lloyd cast for the part of d'Artagnan, because of the touch of bravura which came to him with his Welsh blood. Of all the four he wore his plume at the most provocative angle. And from these notes of Deedes it is plain to see that they played a greater part in the shaping of events than is recognized in the official histories, and might have played a happier part if the solemn inertia of tradition had not checked and bridled them.

Already, on May 2nd, Deedes and Dawnay had foreseen the possibility of a prolonged and static trench warfare, such as had gripped the Western Front; on May 4th, before the assault on Acibaba, Deedes had persuaded Sir Ian Hamilton to send a telegram to Kitchener, begging that the Russian Army of the Caucasus should be urged to send troops to the Bosphorus to hold up some of the Turkish battalions, for otherwise "there was every reason to think we would get the bulk of the Constantinople and other troops against us here. . . ." Then there is a further entry which throws a sharp beam on the psychology of the Commander: ". . . I had another talk to him after dinner in which he said he was postponing his wire till tomorrow 'to wait and see if we got through the night all right'. However, later still, about 10 P.M. he called me and showed me the wire he intended sending, which, I said, is none too soon as we have just now evidence of the undoubted presence of five or six new regiments against us. . . ."

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A month later, May 31st, Lloyd came to his friends, Deedes, Aspinall and Dawnay, with the disquieting news that the Grand Duke had informed the British Cabinet that he was obliged to abandon all idea of attacking the Bosphorus for the present, news, says Deedes, which "we all considered serious". He sums up the position as it already appeared to them, before the heavy losses incurred in the fighting in June and August, in the following sentences :

"It meant that we should be faced on this Peninsula with all the additional troops that had been available at Constantinople v. Russia, another two or three corps. We, again, were in rather a serious condition — small force absolutely exposed to the enemy guns and did he bring up large guns our position *untenable*. Our sea communications absolutely unreliable with three German submarines at large. No battleships within five hours' steaming of us and consequently nothing but our own guns to reply to those of the enemy. Further, we were critically short of ammunition . . . faced with very hot weather and chances of sickness. No hope of reinforcement. . . . Much discussion among us four as to what we should do."

The entry of a few days later, June 5th or 6th, shows what they had decided to do :

"Had a talk for ten minutes to Dawnay. . . . It appears that as a result of forty-eight hours' fighting his way he at last got the C.G.S. and Sir Ian to send off a long and forcible telegram to K. showing up the very precarious situation in which we found ourselves here and demonstrating the absolute need of an ally *or* else reinforcements to the number previously asked for! (5 Divisions).<sup>1</sup> At last therefore (and this was what by various and obvious ways G. Lloyd, Aspinall, Dawnay and myself had been striving for for days)

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the telegram sent by Sir Ian to Lord Kitchener on May 6th and referred to by Deedes on May 4th.

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a true account of our situation was sent home to Lord K. When the telegram was finally drawn up Sir Ian and the C.G.S. were delighted that it should be sent. . . .” And here Deedes concludes with one of his more caustic comments, “. . . the whole thing another example of the maxim that if you want a thing done, do it yourself and on *this* expedition it’s the only chance. . . .”

The substance of this telegram is given by Sir Ian in his memoirs,<sup>1</sup> where he says that he had to send hard truths to Kitchener and tell him that a hundred thousand Turks had been set free by the defeat of the Russian Army of the Caucasus ; that there were eighty thousand Turkish troops on the Peninsula, twenty thousand on the Bulgarian frontier and a further ten thousand on the Asiatic shore, so that the movement of a quarter of a million men against his small and tired force seemed well under way. He added that the temporary withdrawal of the British battleships had further altered the position to the disadvantage of the expedition.

On the receipt of this telegram a meeting of the War Cabinet was called in London and it was decided (though not without dissentients) to reinforce Hamilton with three Divisions of the New Army and the Lowland Territorial Division. But it was Churchill who, in a series of brilliant memoranda, dated June 1st, 11th and 15th, continued to press on the Government the importance of the Gallipoli campaign.

“Here is the prize,” he wrote, “and the only prize which lies within our reach this year. . . . But we must act now, and on a scale which makes speedy success certain.”

Churchill’s admonitions were reinforced by the grave words of Sir Ian, and here, in Deedes’ diary, is one of those footnotes to the historical account which makes this record of so great interest :

“In the morning (June 10th) I had got Priority wire

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary*, vol. i, p. 286.

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from G.H.Q. telling me powerful reinforcements were coming from England. . . . The night before I had written privately to Aspinall and told him that there was so much depression among the troops that we absolutely must have them bucked up somehow, and I said, 'How I wish I could tell them we had reinforcements coming.' Evidently they are sending us troops then. . . . Talks with Dawnay and Aspinall, things written, all urging them to urge the C.G.S. and Sir Ian to insist on telling the truth about our critical situation here, have evidently succeeded — in point of fact Dawnay actually worded the final telegram, all of which he and I and Aspinall and George Lloyd, whose help was as great as anyone's, had discussed beforehand. . . ."

So far, so good, but though reinforcements were promised the question of their transport was no easy one, and in the meantime the position of the Expeditionary Force continued to be, in the words of Deedes, "anything but rosy".

On May 10th German submarines were reported in the vicinity of Cape Helles and news was also received that the Turks had mounted a big gun on the Asiatic shore, capable of shelling the beaches and the ships lying off them. The *Arcadian*, with the whole of the H.Q. Staff, was therefore ordered to Tenedos, to be out of range, but on May 13th Admiral de Robeck told Sir Ian that he could not be responsible for the safety of H.Q. at Tenedos since it was close enough to the mainland for the Turks to make a "cutting-out" expedition. It was therefore necessary to establish it at Imbros, which is eighteen miles from Anzac Cove and fifteen from Cape Helles. Short as is this distance, the effect on the course of the campaign was great. Sir Ian was definitely out of touch with his officers ashore and, though there was a daily service between Imbros and the mainland, communication was difficult to establish, easy to

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interrupt, as was disastrously seen at the battle of Suvla Bay. The psychological effect, moreover, was bad. The men on the Peninsula lived in conditions of constant danger and great discomfort; they were cramped in trenches and had no rest billets where they were not under shell-fire; as the season grew towards summer they suffered very much from heat, from the blazing midday sun on their shelterless trenches, from dust, from a plague of flies and from the loathsome and all-pervading smell of the unburied dead. It is easy to imagine that when a member of the Staff came among them, washed, shaved and trim in his neat uniform, after a night's sleep on Imbros untroubled by shell-fire and a civilized breakfast in mess, he was not a popular figure. Many of the Staff felt the contrast, particularly Deedes and his friends, and there is a story told of Guy Dawnay by one of his contemporaries that well illustrates this. He had been in a forward dug-out with Sir Ian and other members of the Staff during the abortive attack of June 4th, watching the troops advance to an assault on the Turkish trenches, and when at last it was no longer possible to doubt that the attack had failed, that all the careful preparation through weeks of strenuous mental work had come to nought, and that all the gallantry and suffering was being wasted, he left the shelter of the trench and made his way back to the beach. But as he and his companion<sup>1</sup> went, the tragic stream of wounded washed past them; men on stretchers, men walking, supported by their comrades, men filthy, haggard and blood-stained, and Dawnay drew his companion aside, out of their way, saying bitterly, "They won't want to see us now."

Half a dozen times in his diary Deedes comments on the moral harm arising from this absence of Staff officers. On May 20th he writes, "It is good for the men to see

<sup>1</sup> Compton Mackenzie, who described this scene to me.



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members of the G.H.Q. Staff in trenches, I think", and on August 26th, after a talk with Canon Hichens, even more emphatically, "He . . . doesn't give a good account of the troops' *morale*, says that the Generals never go round to see them. Men don't realize (which is the case) that their officers know they are over-worked. It only wants their Generals to go round and have a word, as is done at Anzac, where Birdwood and his Staff and Commanders' influence is worth three Divisions. Determined to speak about this to the authorities, if necessary to Sir Ian. Did speak about it to both Aspinall and Dawnay, who said that they had also done so a score of times."

Partly on account of this conviction, partly to be more closely in touch with his work, Deedes sought and obtained permission, after the removal of G.H.Q. to Imbros, to establish himself on W beach. Thither he went on May 16th, taking his official papers, his tea-kettle and spirit-stove, his neat grey flannel dressing-gown and the penny exercise-book in which he wrote his diary. He established himself in the tent which had been used by Doughty-Wylie, who had been killed in the first days of the landing, and he could have had no illusions as to what he was letting himself in for, since he had witnessed the shelling of the beach from Acibaba on May 13th, and the panic among the Greek workmen when the shells fell among the congested men and horses of that narrow area.

Shelling continued to harass the beach during the whole of the campaign, both from Acibaba and the Asiatic shore, and after the withdrawal of the battleships the British had no guns heavy enough to retaliate. This, already referred to by Deedes on May 31st, was due to a naval disaster which did much to darken the scene for the anxious leaders of the Expeditionary Force. Having lost five capital ships on March 18th, the Admiral lost three more in May: *Goliath*, torpedoed on May 12th, *Triumph*,

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sunk by a German submarine on May 25th,<sup>1</sup> and *Majestic* on May 27th. After that date the Admiral dared not risk his battleships as immobile targets for submarines round Cape Helles and left only cruisers, destroyers and light craft to guard the long and dangerous communications between Cape Helles and the Army's base.

Deedes saw the sinking of *Majestic*. "Looked out of my tent", he writes, "at 6.30 this morning, hearing some noise — I had heard a small explosion — to see the *Majestic* (who was within a hundred yards of the beach, consequently close to our encampment) over on her side with men scrambling off down the side into picket-boats and tugs which were all round her.

"Pitiable sight. As we left Imbros yesterday we had seen her sail out in all her glory, a magnificent sight. All that there is to be seen today is just the green bottom of her keel showing out of the water — the whole of that huge ship, a million and a half pounds, gone.

"She was torpedoed. I fancy she went down in under ten minutes. . . . Two modern battleships in two days, one wonders what's going to happen now? When they have destroyed or driven off our battleships they will, I suppose, start on the troop supply-ships . . . then where shall we be?

"General feeling of desperation all round. Shelling of the camp started again. With the ships gone one doesn't see what there will be to stop it."

This passage gives one of the few glimpses in this most objective of records of Deedes' personal reactions, and it is easy to understand the weight of apprehension which burdened his mind and against which he fortified himself by the patient stoicism which is so marked a trait of his

<sup>1</sup> This is the date in Deedes' diary under which the news appears; Churchill gives the date as the 26th — probably because that was the date on which the loss became known in England.

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character. But it is, though a patient, not a passive stoicism, and however grim the outlook there is never a trace of that spirit of *laissez-faire* which weakens the moral fibre of some men in circumstances such as these: the grimmer became the outlook, the harder he worked, finding perhaps some relief for the tension of the spirit in the manifold activities of the day. The entry of the very next day after the sinking of *Majestic* gives some idea of the varied nature of these activities and is characteristic, with its brief laconic sentences, its lack of comments or decription and the total absence of any literary grace.

“Busy day. Went over to the French with Dawnay at 9 A.M. I saw about the topographical section, also heard that Variani of French railways, Constantinople, was here — arranged to go back to meet him at 3 P.M.

“Had a walk round Seddülbahir village with Dawnay, lovely day, flowers. Worked till 3 P.M., again went to French to have confabulation with La Mouche, Chef de Service de Renseignement. Also saw Hunter-Weston. In evening, conference with Hoyland, whom I am sending to Mudros, and ‘Y’ about contre-espionage at Imbros, Tenedos and Mudros. . . .”

On W beach he remained for the next six weeks, sitting quietly in his tent, or at a small table outside, working at his mass of documents — reports, instructions, translations from or into Turkish — with as steady a concentration as if he were in a London office, while shells whined overhead or fell with a sickening thump on the crowded beach. Such a picture of him is given by one of his contemporaries, Compton Mackenzie,<sup>1</sup> who was an Intelligence Officer under Deedes during the campaign and was later sent by him, on account of his health, to Athens. “He was the bravest man I ever knew,” Compton Mackenzie once said to me, and then added, “at least, I don’t know that I

<sup>1</sup> Compton Mackenzie, *Gallipoli Memories*.

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should call it courage; it was something quite different from what other men have."

That is a shrewd analysis. Deedes has certainly an iron nerve; that is a gift some men are born with — and some women. His mother had the same quality of fearlessness, and even in extreme old age, when nearly involved in a bad motor accident, was the only one of the party who showed no sign of being ruffled. But Deedes has something further, an absolute indifference to death that is interwoven with the whole texture of his personality. It amounts almost to a *nostalgie de la mort*, for he once confessed that whenever danger threatens his mind leaps to a question-mark, an immediate "perhaps". He did not explain this curious remark but to those who know him well the context is clear: perhaps at last the worldly task is ended and he may lay down the tools which have always been so heavy to his hand. For to him death is not an end but a beginning, an entry into a realm where lies the only true reality. So that the bald and unemotional little notes in which he records the shelling of W beach — "the usual scene . . . this running into dug-outs the moment shelling starts seems to me very bad — and very injurious to everyone's morale", or ". . . at 11 P.M. was woken up by finding the camp heavily shelled. . . . Shelling by day is one thing when you can see but in pitch dark when you can only hear the row . . . is somewhat trying. I got to sleep about 1 A.M. . . ." — conceal a state of mind which is perhaps abnormal, but which gives him an equilibrium all but proof against external shocks. He is able to concentrate on a piece of work or on a line of thought in circumstances when most other men are conscious of a call upon their courage.

An example of this is given by Compton Mackenzie in one of those witty descriptions in which he excels.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Gallipoli Memories.*

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It was Deedes' habit to take a walk every afternoon, if it were possible, and there are many jottings in the diary concerning this daily exercise: over to the French lines, to the Royal Naval Division or the Lancashires "for tea", and very often with Lloyd or Dawney. On this particular day, June 21st, he notes briefly, "Went for a walk in the evening with Compton Mackenzie up to Gulley Beach. . . . Weather very perfect, no wind and not very hot. . . ." But Compton Mackenzie's account is very different. Deedes, he says, asked him to go for a walk "to forget the war", and as they trudged over that dusty land he began to talk on that subject which had begun to haunt his mind even in Turkey and which, during the war, came to dominate his thoughts with increasing urgency, the necessity of the social reconstruction of England. They went along at a smart pace — Deedes is a rapid walker — and he talked as he can talk when his enthusiasm is in play, pouring out a stream of exposition, argument and illustration. But, unfortunately for himself, Compton Mackenzie had observed shells bursting over the little hill which was apparently their objective. He tried to deflect Deedes, but his senior officer stepped briskly on and even when a waggon passed them, tearing down the road as the driver flogged his horses and the shrapnel sang above, Deedes continued his walk and his exposition, seemingly quite oblivious. At last Mackenzie ventured to draw attention to the situation by remarking that he wondered where the shells were coming from, but he only elicited the question, "What shells?" in the midst of a disquisition on the infirmities of the social system. It was with considerable relief that at length Mackenzie found himself released, when Deedes perceived Sir Ian and some of the Staff and went over to speak to them, politely thanking Mackenzie for the nice walk and remarking, "It's such a relief to forget the war for a bit."

The work which Deedes was supervising from W beach

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during this phase of the campaign was that dealing with spies, or "agents" as they are euphemistically called. This was only a part of his work, for in the effort to acquire all possible information about the enemy, the strength and disposition of their forces, their movements, their casualties and their morale, and about the possibilities of disaffection among the civil population, he had to read and collate the Turkish newspapers. He had also to make a résumé of press telegrams for issue as a news-sheet to the British troops and to try to gauge the value of statements published in the Greek and Bulgarian press; in short, he combined with the duties of an Intelligence Officer those of a Ministry of Information. But the notes dealing with the organization of "agents", which covered the whole of the Aegean as well as Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey itself, are naturally the most interesting of his references to his own work. Since the Allies had against them not only the Turkish espionage system but also some of the very best of the German, the selection of agents from among the mixed crowd of Greeks, Cretans, Armenians, Arabs and disaffected Turks was a ticklish business. Some of the men who presented themselves were genuinely pro-Ally, in revolt against the Turkish Government, or with old scores to work off, but the majority of minor agents on both sides do it for money and have to be subjected to a system of checks and counter-checks, to make sure that they do not find a higher bidder or profit from the pay of both sides.

This possibility was a constant preoccupation with I(B) and the diary is full of entries, usually laconic, but sometimes with a glancing touch of humour, of the alarms and excursions occasioned by the doings of these gentry. Clearly not all of them can safely be quoted, but the following passages will give some idea of the net that was spread over the Aegean and into which all fish, little or big, were dredged. If among the sprats and minnows some really big

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fish — in other words, an important piece of information — was brought to the surface, great was the satisfaction of the fisher. One particularly fine haul was the discovery (entered under the date August 7th) of a “German gang at Mitylene, headed by their own German consul . . . who was doing fine work for the country giving submarine information, running a paper and probably working a wireless from the island”.

This was the only occasion, however, on which he netted a German; his usual dealings were with Greeks or with Turkish deserters. Deedes was always convinced that the Turks had no fundamental quarrel with the British, that they had been engineered into the war by Enver and Talaat, who confidently expected a quick German victory and who were helped to obtain popular backing by the retention by the Admiralty of the two Turkish battleships built in British yards. But the most vital fact in the situation was the alliance with Russia; the Turks were convinced that Russia intended to take Constantinople, and most of them were prepared to fight to the last round of ammunition to defend their ancient capital. Deedes, in his interrogation of Turkish prisoners, in a conversation he had in no-man's-land with a Turkish officer sent to ask an armistice to bury the dead, and from many independent reports, found so little animosity against the British that he even decided to establish “Desertion Agencies” in Turkey itself, with “passing out” agencies near the frontier. He anticipated that most of the deserters would be Christians or Arabs, but he was prepared to trust a few genuinely Turkish deserters and was rather hurt when this was vetoed by Sir Ian. On May 11th he writes: “Went ashore with the C.G.S. at 9.30 and established two young contre-espionage agents — gave them a coffee-shop to run as being a good way of getting in touch with the criminals ashore! . . . Met Frenrie who again regretted that I had not been allowed to

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take and use two Turkish prisoners whom he had found as 'agents'. Explained to him that it was not my fault but that they would not let me. Spoke to the C.G.S. about it strongly — said if I was not to be trusted in the matter, no one could be. He promised to speak to Ward and now I have obtained permission. . . ."

The coffee-shop seems to have caused Deedes a good deal of trouble. On June 15th he notes: ". . . In the evening Plunkett came down late with a young officer who brought a long story against one of the interpreters. . . . He also suspects the canteen, so do many other people . . . putting close watches on the whole matter."

On June 26th the canteen was again in the news and Deedes writes: "Mostly engaged in trying to ensnare S. and A. into our nets. These two men were employed in the Greek canteen at Cape Helles but lived at Tenedos and forwarded the goods thence. They were employed by G., my agent, and . . . very serious accusations were brought against all these men by the French and others, making them out to be German spies. By dint of much cunningness I got G., S. and A. all safely put under a guard. The story is a long one as to how I threw dust in their eyes and caught them, but it reflects credit on I(B)."

The atmosphere of suspicion which is inseparable from the work of espionage is well exemplified by another series of entries. "May 29th . . . Received the rather disquieting news from Athens that rumours had reached there that the loyalty of Y. was not above suspicion. Wired to Athens that full enquiries should be made — half-measures impossible — either the man is to be trusted or he is not. He, meanwhile, had gone to Tenedos to organize two parties, one to land on mainland and go to Balikesir, one to ascertain the number and disposition of the Turks on the mainland at Kumkale, with view to a cutting-out expedition. He was then to go on to Mudros and give Hoyland,



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whom I had sent there, [information],<sup>1</sup> the situation being described by the Admiral there as serious in that respect [espionage].”

Doubts about Y. were the more serious since he was one of Deedes' principal agents, and at Deedes' request had been given a free pass to travel wherever he wished, in his own motor boat, so that, were he disloyal, his opportunities for conveying information to the enemy were unrivalled. Deedes was convinced that he was sound but the French were very jumpy and, in order to placate them, Deedes was obliged to place him under surveillance, though he felt sure that there was no evidence against him and that, once he had guessed he was not trusted by I(B), the British would lose his services. The end of the story is not given, but the last entry in the diary concerning him seems to bear out Deedes' contention as to his innocence: “. . . Y. and S. both at Imbros under detention, but although charges continued to be brought against them, none were substantiated”.

Later Deedes sums up the general situation with a kind of resigned shrug: “Everyone now thinks everyone else a spy, so the matter is getting hard to deal with!”

By the time Deedes left W beach and returned to Imbros (June 28th) a very complete organization for the collection and forwarding of information had been evolved. Every island had its Intelligence Officer, with the exception of Tenedos, and each officer had his own fund for the expenses of the work, and his own cypher; Compton Mackenzie had a roving commission to travel from one to the other, and to Athens, to maintain liaison between the various officers and between them and I(B). The question of contraband still continued to worry the Intelligence Officers, particularly Lloyd and Deedes, the former indeed chafing so greatly under the restricted outlook of his superior officers that he

<sup>1</sup> A word missing in MS.

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thought of asking for a transfer and had to be restrained by Deedes. They were informed that the question of contraband "was not their affair", but by dint of perseverance they at last evolved a fairly satisfactory organization for dealing with it and persuaded Sir Ian to protest to Athens whenever there were contraventions of the regulations.

Other ideas also shaped themselves in the fertile mind of Deedes. He talked to Dawnay and Aspinall about the value of keeping the Embassies in the Balkan countries closely in touch with the Turkish situation: the number of troops on the Peninsula, their state of health, their morale, the number of deserters — in short, to supply all the facts which it was his business to collect on the spot. He therefore asked that he should be allowed to correspond with the Military Attachés, as he had done with the Military Attaché at The Hague, when he was at the War Office. Dawnay and Aspinall put the suggestion before Sir Ian and the C.G.S., but the Chiefs refused to have anything to do with it officially, saying that they could only recognize and deal with the Foreign Office. When one reckons the time that must elapse before a communication could reach London from Gallipoli, there be dealt with by an overworked Ministry and returned to the Balkans, it is clear that most information travelling by that route would be completely out-of-date and therefore valueless. However, by dint of further perseverance, Deedes at last obtained consent for a courier to run between Athens, Sofia, Nish and Belgrade. He himself says that he had had to labour the point for months and did not get permission till the end of July and then, perhaps, only because Mr. Amery, who came out to Imbros in the early part of the month, thought the suggestion valuable.

At this time also, the beginning of July, after his return to Imbros, Deedes took the first tentative step in the negotiations with Prince Sabahattin, Pretender to the

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throne of Turkey, in which he was to be much more closely concerned later, in Egypt.

It happened because the representative of the Prince, Kemal Bey, came from Athens, where his master was living in exile, to see Sir Ian and, being Turkish, was turned over to Deedes for an interview. Deedes found a very great dislike and distrust of German influence on the part of the Prince and his emissary, and an equally strong belief that the majority of Turks, save the immediate supporters of Enver and Talaat, would be glad to finish the war. Whether this was so or not it is, even now, not easy to determine. Deedes may have been misled into thinking the disaffection greater than it was because of the many personal friends he had in Turkey, any one of whom, happening to meet him (like the envoy of the Vali at Smyrna), continued to treat him with courtesy and friendliness, but the shadow of our alliance with Russia hung ever in the background, and until the Russian threat to Constantinople was removed, the ranks were closed. So at least it seems to me, from a study of all Deedes' records. After his interview with Kemal Bey, however, he formed the ambitious project of trying to get possession of Smyrna, not by force but by guile, landing an expeditionary force of Greek prisoners and Turkish deserters, after duly preparing the ground by emissaries. When he broached the subject to Sir Ian the latter said that, while the consent of the Foreign Office would have to be obtained, he, for his part, had no desire to go on slaughtering the Turks, who had fought splendidly and like gentlemen.

All such projects, however, fall into the background at this point in Deedes' story, for the stage was already being set for the grimmest and last struggle for possession of that barren tongue of land, the Gallipoli Peninsula.

## *Chapter Thirteen*

DURING the months of June and July the British and French troops launched three attacks against the Turks at Cape Helles which, though they did not succeed in capturing Acibaba, were "officially successful" in that they advanced the Allied lines by several thousand yards and strengthened their position on both flanks. But the cost was heavy ; over twelve thousand men killed and wounded, and though the Turks were estimated to have lost thirty thousand, they had, after the Russian collapse in the third week of July, an almost inexhaustible reservoir of fresh troops on which to draw. Aspinall considered that, could the new Divisions promised by Kitchener have reached the Aegean in time to be put into the line during the first fortnight of July, the Turkish defence could have been broken and Acibaba captured. But of the Allied troops engaged during that tremendous fortnight many of the battalions were mere skeletons and, with the summer season, sickness had begun to take heavy toll. The whole Expeditionary Force suffered from dysentery ; many had to be removed to hospital, but even those still considered effectives were afflicted in a minor degree and their strength and their spirits alike sapped. Deedes says that on W beach there were many casualties that could have been avoided, for the men were too weary to drag themselves to and from the latrines and lay about near them, in the open, instead of taking cover. The

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decision to await the arrival of the new Divisions from England was therefore inevitable.

By the first week in August Sir Ian Hamilton had ninety-seven thousand men under his command. Of these, thirty-seven thousand were under General Birdwood and consisted of the Anzacs, one new Division of "Kitchener's Army" (the 13th) and one British and one Indian brigade. Thirty-five thousand, under General Davies, were at Helles, and twenty-five thousand, under General Stopford, were to land at Suvla Bay. The Commander of the Turkish forces, General Liman von Sanders, had a hundred and ten thousand Turks with which to oppose the British, but of these twenty thousand were on the Asiatic shore and twenty thousand still guarding the lines at Bulayir. In effect, therefore, the Anzacs had thirty thousand men against them and the troops at Helles forty thousand. To repel the attack at Suvla there were only three Turkish battalions when the battle opened.

The plan for this great battle was, military writers agree, well conceived. It was worked out in the most minute detail and every conceivable preparation was made. For that due credit must be given to the able and tireless work of Aspinall and Dawnay, to whom, says Deedes, writing just after the event, the scheme was almost entirely due and "proved to have been perfect in conception".

Some idea of the difficulties that had to be faced in making the plans may be gathered from the following passages in the official history<sup>1</sup>: "In the folds of that barren and waterless hillside comprising the Anzac position, no part of which was more than a thousand yards from the enemy's front line, the existing garrison was already in crowded occupation of nearly every available inch of ground that was hidden from Turkish view. Yet, before the operations could begin, another 25,000 men, large

<sup>1</sup> *Military Operations — Gallipoli* (Aspinall-Oglander), vol. ii, pp. 134-135.

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numbers of animals, vehicles and guns, and vast quantities of ammunition, stores and supplies would have to be landed on the crowded and frequently shelled piers, and this without attracting the watchful attention of the enemy. Terraces and dugouts had to be cut into the hillsides to accommodate the reinforcements and elaborate arrangements completed for securing a supply of water. . . .”

And further: “Owing to shortage of water, and the difficulties of loading and unloading animals at Mudros, all the artillery and transport of the new Divisions, except water-carts and cookers for the infantry, were detained at Alexandria till wanted on the Peninsula. Infantry . . . were mostly disembarked at Mudros and accommodated in tents at Mudros or Imbros. But the water supply at these places was scanty and six battalions of the 10th Division were sent to Mitylene. The Greek Government, still neutral, were not asked to sanction British use of the island but were informed that military necessity admitted of no other course.”

General Dawnay has the impression that the “high-handed action” with regard to Mitylene was first suggested by Deedes to the Musketeers in conclave, and by them put forward. The object, of course, like all the work of Intelligence during this period of preparation, was to deceive the Turks as to the extent of the forthcoming attack and the direction from which it was to be launched. To this end, also, small reconnoitring parties were sent to Ayvalik and Smyrna, the landing-party in the Keshan-Malgara area for which Deedes had long been asking was sent to cut communications, and Compton Mackenzie, on Mitylene, received instructions to select suitable camp sites and make contracts for them with the authorities on the island. Since the troops had eventually to be moved from Mitylene to the Peninsula, it was further arranged that the cable between Mitylene and Chios (the nearest island) should

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be fouled and the telegraph wires between Dedeağaç and the interior should be cut by a certain "Mercury" at a given signal, on the night before the operations began.

"What effect all this had", writes Deedes on August 7th, "is not yet clear; whether, that is, it had the effect of deflecting any body of Turkish troops . . .", but he did less than justice to the ingenuity of the booby-traps devised by himself and his friends for, in effect, twenty thousand Turks were pinned down to the Asiatic shore. Moreover, the attack at Suvla Bay took the enemy completely by surprise and at the opening of the battle the Turkish position there was very lightly held; the secret of the whole plan of operations, indeed, was remarkably well kept and Deedes, in a later entry, can say with a pardonable flash of pride that it reflected no little credit on I(B).

Of the actual fighting between August 6th and August 16th Deedes at the time knew little. He was at Imbros, and those directly concerned with the operations, even his friends Aspinall and Dawnay, were in no mood for conversation. They were too busy; far too anxious; living at a tension it is almost impossible to imagine, with the whole complicated plan, over which they had brooded for weeks, stamped on their brains, and, as the hours went by and news began to come in, or worse still, *not* to come in, a cold fear gripped the heart as to whether anything had miscarried, as to whether some miscalculation on their part, some lacuna in vital arrangements, was to bring disaster.

Disaster came indeed, but not through mistakes in the original conception and not through a failure in the courage and devotion of the fighting men; it was due to leadership so faulty and at times so irresponsible that even now it is difficult to treat it objectively. There was, besides, that element of luck which enters into all battles and which, on this occasion, went against the British.

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Here, in a very few words, is a sketch of the chief events :

(1) On the afternoon of August 6th, the VIII Corps, which comprised part of the famous 29th Division and part of the 42nd, attacked the Turkish main defences at Helles. It was meant to be no more than a "holding attack", but there were forty thousand Turks to be held, strongly entrenched and well supplied with heavy guns. The British supply of high-explosive shell was, as during every phase of this campaign, inadequate to the task imposed, and when the troops advanced across no-man's-land, after a seven-hours wait in trenches under a burning sun, they were shattered by the enemy fire. The casualties of the 88th Brigade amounted to 2000 out of the 3000 engaged, and the Turkish line was everywhere intact, save on the extreme left. A second, night attack was therefore proposed, but the forward trenches were jammed with wounded, Lieut.-Colonel Geddes had only fifty unwounded men of his battalion with him in the front line, and any attempt at a further attack could only have resulted in so great a confusion in the British line that a counter-attack by the Turks would have been extremely dangerous. General de Lisle had therefore reluctantly to abandon the project and, with the exception of a small salient in a vineyard west of the Krithia road which was held against all subsequent Turkish counter-attacks, the British line was not advanced in this sector. And in twenty-four hours the VIII Corps had lost nearly 3500 officers and men, whereas 4000 had been placed as the *maximum* it could afford to lose in the operations at Helles. Clearly no further attack was possible, but at least the operation, costly as it was, had succeeded in holding the Turks and preventing the dispatch of more than a small reinforcement to Anzac.

(2) The Anzacs, at the outset of the campaign, had to attack over broken and hilly country, intersected by deep



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ravines and covered in places by scrub. It had been impossible to reconnoitre the country, maps were still, in August 1915, unreliable, and the Greek guides who were employed were also imperfectly acquainted with the terrain.

On the evening of August 6th, one body of Anzacs attacked and captured Lone Pine Ridge, to the right of the Australian position, and though the Turks counter-attacked both on the 7th and the 9th, they failed to dislodge them. The main attack, however, was to be on the massif of Chunuk Bair, the high ridge which commanded the low-lying country across the neck of the Peninsula to Maidos, on the southern shore. On a dark and moonless night sixteen thousand men advanced up three ravines but, as on the occasion of the landing, one column lost its direction in the darkness — this time owing to the faulty advice of the Greek guide — and when daylight came the men, weakened as many of them were by dysentery and exhausted by the long night's march in such difficult country, had not covered more than half the distance to their objective. It was therefore decided to let them rest, to consolidate the position and to advance again to the attack on the following night, August 7th. The other two columns had reached their objectives, two hills known as the Nek and Baby 700, and attacked with vigour, but their casualties were disastrously heavy, and here, as at Helles, go far to support the thesis which the events of the war of 1914-1918 seemed to prove, that an attack on a strongly entrenched position is far too costly for the attackers unless the defenders are notably inferior in numbers or artillery.<sup>1</sup>

(3) Such conditions, of a greatly inferior defending force, were for a very brief space of time realized at Suvla.

British Intelligence had estimated the number of Turks

<sup>1</sup> It was this theory, alas ! which created the Maginot Line, and in 1939 only the German military mind had grasped the changes brought about by air power and tanks.

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in that sector as four thousand ; actually, there were only eighteen hundred on the morning of August 6th, while twenty-five thousand men had been allotted to General Stopford for his operations. The first task was the capture of two hills, Hill 10 and Lalababa, on either side of the dried Salt Lake, and of the high ground north of the lake towards Kiritch Tepe. Once this was accomplished, the troops were to advance against the scrub-covered heights of Ismailoğlu Tepe, and it was confidently expected that all these positions would be occupied by dawn. As a matter of fact, only the first two small heights, Hill 10 and Lalababa, were in British hands on the afternoon of August 7th, for although, during the morning and afternoon of that day, the force which had captured Lalababa grew to twenty thousand men and had only to advance three miles and sweep the Turks away, no orders were given. During the whole of that day General Stopford, the commanding officer, remained on the monitor *Jonquil*, in order to be in wireless communication with G.H.Q. at Imbros. So the troops remained idle throughout the greater part of the day until the late afternoon when, after toiling along five miles of sandy beach in the burning heat, weary and suffering severely from thirst, they attacked and took Chocolate Hill with the loss of a thousand men.

Liman von Sanders, the German commander, was not so leisurely in his movements as General Stopford. By 3.30 of the morning of August 7th he had realized that the British thrust was against his weakest point and he ordered the 7th Turkish Division from Bulayir to reinforce Suvla, thirty miles away. At 8.30 in the morning he further ordered the 12th Division from Bulayir, and it says much for the toughness and endurance of the Turks that by that afternoon, when the British had advanced no further than Chocolate Hill, the Turkish reinforcements had reached Anafarta, about three miles from Ismailoğlu.

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At Imbros, when day dawned on August 7th and news began to come in that neither at Anzac nor at Helles had the objectives been fully attained, there were very uneasy minds. From Suvla there was no news at all, save one cable stating, "All landings successful," and a little later a wireless message to Admiral de Robeck, confirming the assumption that the opposing force was small and that no fresh troops had recently arrived. So far, good; though at that very moment the two Turkish Divisions from Bulayir were making their magnificent forced march across difficult country to Ismailoğlu. Of this fact, of course, G.H.Q. was ignorant, and Sir Ian seems to have been confident of success in spite of the hold-up at Helles and Anzac. It was otherwise with Aspinall and Dawnay. In the morning Dawnay, unable, one surmises, to support the inactivity of Imbros, went over to Suvla and returned with disquieting news. Deedes remembers him coming in among them at about one o'clock of the day and saying, with a mixture of cold anger and hot despair, "The troops are on the beach, washing their clothes!"

General Dawnay himself says of this incident: "Finding General Stopford still at sea, I went ashore to the 11th Division H.Q. There I failed to get access to General Hammersley, but made vehement comments to his General Staff on their inaction. I returned hot-foot to report to G.H.Q. at Imbros, only to gain the impression that I was looked on as unduly impatient."

On this same morning, he says further, another colleague of his and Deedes, Captain Ian Smith (G.S. Intelligence), actually walked across from Anzac to Suvla Bay! Constantly thinking he must be behind our troops advancing from Suvla, he kept edging east of north, till he at last realized that he was alone in Turkey, two miles or more in front of any of General Stopford's troops. He saw no more sign of Turk than of British, and turning back at last

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towards the sea, found the latter still on the beach.

Sir Ian meanwhile had sent General Stopford a gentlemanly cable, saying, “. . . Chief glad to hear enemy opposition weakening and knows you will take advantage of this to push on rapidly. . . .” Stopford’s interpretation of this admonition was to order the troops to dig in and “consolidate their position” during August 8th and to be prepared to attack on the 9th.

On the morning of August 8th, Aspinall and Colonel Hankey, Secretary to the War Cabinet, who had been sent out from England to report on the situation in the Aegean, went to Suvla in a trawler and, landing before noon, found what Aspinall describes as “a holiday appearance”, the whole bay at peace and the shore fringed with bathers. When they started to walk inland they discovered that the height of Ismailoğlu had not been occupied, that no orders for an advance had been given and that the General commanding the 11th Division opined that his troops must have a day’s rest before they attacked, which therefore could not be before the 9th.

Aspinall therefore went back to the *Jonquil* and was greeted by General Stopford in high spirits.

“Well, Aspinall,” he said, “the men have done excellently and have been magnificent.”

“But they haven’t reached the hills, sir,” said Aspinall.

“No,” replied the General, “but they are ashore.”<sup>1</sup>

Aspinall went off to de Robeck’s flagship in order to send the following urgent message to Sir Ian: “Just been ashore where I found all quiet. No rifle fire, no artillery fire, and apparently no Turks. IX Corps resting. Feel confident that golden opportunities are being lost and look upon the situation as serious.”

<sup>1</sup> This dialogue is taken from the official history, by General Aspinall-Oglander, vol. ii, pp. 276, 277. It will be remembered that the Colonel Aspinall of Deedes’ diary and General Aspinall-Oglander are the same person.

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For some reason this message did not reach Imbros till eight o'clock at night, but whether it would have influenced Sir Ian it is hard to say, for at 11 A.M. he had sent a fatal message to Stopford: "It is of the greatest importance to forestall the enemy on the high ground north of Anafarta and on the spur running thence to Ismailoğlu Tepe. If you find the ground lightly held by the enemy, push on. But in view of want of adequate artillery support I do not want you to attack an entrenched position held in strength."

"Within the terms of this half-hearted order", writes General Aspinall-Oglander, "lies the root of the final failure of the Suvla operations."<sup>1</sup>

About 6 P.M. of this most leisurely day, Sir Ian arrived on the flagship where, as he himself says, "Aspinall turned up in a fever". Sir Ian therefore went to the *Jonquil* where he found Stopford resting his strained knee after a walk ashore, "tired but happy"! By this time Sir Ian's confidence was badly shaken, but he was too much of a gentleman to do what Liman von Sanders had done to the Commander of the 7th and 12th Divisions from Bulayir when he protested that his men were too exhausted after their thirty-mile march to attack before August 9th — throw him out and appoint a successor on the spot. The successor appointed by von Sanders was Mustafa Kemal, afterwards to be known throughout the world as Atatürk.

Sir Ian compromised with his convictions and his manners by going ashore in person and telling General Hammersley that his Division must advance at once and then dig itself in.

But it was already too late; the Turks were now in force on that hitherto empty sector of the front, they were commanded by a man of genius, and all the valour of the British troops who stormed and captured Scimitar Hill and Ismailoğlu on the 9th August, at the cost of so much suffering,

<sup>1</sup> *Military Operations — Gallipoli* (Aspinall-Oglander), vol. ii, p. 273.

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could not hold it. The Turks counter-attacked and dislodged them, and never, for the remainder of the campaign, were they to recapture it. And because of the failure at Suvla all the desperate fighting of the Anzac sector came to naught. On August 8th the New Zealanders gained an important foothold on the main objective, Chunuk Bair, but the centre and left of the Anzac line being unsupported from Suvla they could make little progress. On August 9th, while the troops at Helles were still engaged in the long fierce battle against forty thousand Turks which raged for a week, the Gurkhas and the 6th Loyal Lancashires, by a brilliant assault, gained the saddle of Chunuk Bair and saw below them the narrow neck of the Peninsula so long and so ardently fought for. Beyond, they saw the Straits with British ships lying in the roadstead and, unsupported, this gallant body of men made a dash down the hill towards Maidos in an attempt at last to cut off the Turkish positions from their base at Constantinople. But by one of those tragic errors which haunt the story of this ill-fated campaign, our own ships, thinking they were enemy troops, opened fire on them and forced them to retire, badly shattered. For one brief moment they had been in sight of their goal, but never again, in all the months of the campaign, did the road to success lie open.

During the fateful ten days between August 6th and August 16th Deedes was not in touch with the main current of events and his notes give only a partial and not always correct account, since Intelligence and Operations had now separate messes and, as he says, "Long faces there do not encourage one to go and ask what the situation is — I realize it is anything but glowing". But he knew enough of the inability to gain the heights, of the heavy toll of casualties, of the peremptory dismissal of Stopford, to realize that once again the Expeditionary Force had met with failure and he sums up in one brief sentence: "The whole thing

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caused the bitterest disappointment at G.H.Q., where we had pinned the greatest hopes on these operations”.

Following this there is an interesting note, on August 18th, of the gist of a conversation with Colonel Hankey which shows that already these two, at least, had considered the possibility that success could not be achieved in this theatre of war. They discussed the possibilities of compromise as an alternative to complete failure. Deedes advocated compromise on the basis of the retention of Constantinople by the Turks (his old thesis), the opening and neutralizing of the Straits and a free passage for the British armies to go north against the Germans. “Hankey,” writes Deedes, “in whose mind there was already some seed of this nature, said he found me very persuasive. He is just going home — there he may find conditions such as to make such a proposal acceptable.” Before leaving, Hankey spoke to Sir Ian about Deedes’ view, and suggested that, in the event of a compromise being sought, Deedes himself, with his knowledge of Turkey and his many friendships with Turks, might be used for the negotiations. Sir Ian replied that he would welcome such a course so long as Deedes did not go as a member of his Staff and that he himself were not implicated, and Deedes himself said that the best way to set about it would be for him to go to Athens in civilian clothes and open negotiations from there. But on August 21st, a last full-dress assault was to be made on the heights of Anafarta, and the diary gives a vivid little picture of the Higher Command at this pregnant moment and of the psychological reactions of some of the principal actors.

On August 20th Deedes was sent ashore to interview a Turkish officer who had turned up in the British lines with a white flag. He proved to have no mission from the Turks but to be a deserter and, after seeing him, Deedes remained to dinner at De Lisle’s headquarters. After dinner, he says,

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"we remained talking to De Lisle for some time, he telling us all about the Polo team in the D.L.I., also pig-sticking stories from India."

Such a conversation seems a strange introduction to the great battle of the following day, but it was probably deliberate on the part of De Lisle, an attempt to maintain to the last an atmosphere of coolness and normality.

"Next day", so runs the notes, "was the day of our final effort to get the Anafarta heights and on the result of the day depended, in great degree, the future of this campaign and no little influence on the war as a whole.

"Went over at 1.15 with Sir Ian, C.G.S., Aspinall, Dawnay, General Ellison, Pollen, Val<sup>1</sup> and Freddy Maitland. On arrival I went to Corps H.Q. and spent the afternoon with De Lisle, Hardress, Lloyd and Pat Onslow. Sir Ian, not wishing to disturb De Lisle, went and sat on a hill by himself — then came the usual thing with all its anxieties. De Lisle said that on such occasions he always felt sick with anxiety.

"At 2.30 P.M. to the second the artillery bombardment began — ships and batteries. Immediately the enemy's position was one cloud of dust and smoke, for all the gorse and scrub caught fire from our high-explosive shells. The enemy replied, though in very small proportion to ours — they zealously bombarded one of our F.A. Brigades, which was just below where we were sitting, trying hard to find it. . . . At exactly 3 P.M. (all these things work like a machine) began the advance of the famous 29th Division (the 29th had been especially brought round by sea from Helles for the day, to see if with their gallant help the position could not be won) — then came the usual stream of telegrams: so-and-so have taken such-and-such a trench — so-and-so is hung up by an enemy M.G. at such-and-such a place — the so-and-so Brigade has just begun to

<sup>1</sup> Val Braithwaite, A.D.C. to Sir Ian and son of the C.G.S.



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advance — an endless chronicle of events ; all eagerly studied and recorded on the map.

“ A little later came significant and disheartening messages from an aeroplane to the effect that a long line of troops is seen behind so-and-so hills advancing on so-and-so, obviously reinforcements — the fear that enemy reinforcements will be up before the position is won — and so it goes on till 7 P.M. up and down, at which hour we left, the Yeomanry (from Egypt) just being put in as the final reserve. Sir Ian comes up for five minutes for a word with De Lisle, shakes hands with Peel with, ‘ God be with you all ’, and off go the G.H.Q. party. Nothing much is said, but we know that again we have failed to reach our objective, that our position at Suvla Bay cannot be secured.

“ Dawnay points out to me the gravity of the position as we go home.”

So writes Deedes, but Sir Ian's optimism seems to have been proof against even these events. On August 15th, when Lord Brassey had condoled with him on the “ terrible defeat ”, he had replied that it was not a “ defeat ”, and he notes in his diary, under the date August 18th, that, when he was holding a council of war on the advisability of another attack on Ismailoğlu Tepe “ as to the coming attack, the tone of the Conference was hopeful ”. It may have been so with some of his Staff but it certainly was not with Dawnay and Deedes, whom he notes as being present. It is true that on August 22nd he writes that “ Suvla has gone wrong again ”, but when Dawnay, at his orders, drafted a report on the situation for Lord Kitchener, Sir Ian considered it too “ pessimistic ” and re-wrote it himself to present a picture in colours less sombre.

Sir Ian's diary of these terrible days is a strange document, especially when read side by side with the bald, inelegant entries of Deedes' diary, each one of which records relevant facts, often without comment, nearly all

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without the interposition of the personal factor. What Deedes thought must be gathered from the briefest sentences: "Nothing much is said, but we know that again we have failed . . .", "We all consider the position *most* serious. . . ." What Deedes felt can only be read between the lines, but Sir Ian's diary wears a literary dress, with little pen-pictures of the scenery, reflections on the nervous strain of a commander's lot and, strangest of all, the description of the funeral of a brilliant young airman at which he was very much moved—more, it might almost seem from the context, than by the sufferings of the forty-eight thousand of his men who were killed or wounded in the fighting between August 6th and August 21st.

Sir Ian, even his critics are agreed, is brave and honourable, but he belonged to a different world from that in which the war of 1914-1918 was fought, a world in which the officer still belonged to a closed order of chivalry and in which personal prowess might still redeem a failure of plan—the stout heart, in short, reach its goal in spite of the fumbling brain! It was not his fault but his misfortune, and the misfortune of those for whose destinies he had been made responsible, that he could not appreciate the grim logic of events, but to the men around him, like Deedes and his three friends, who experienced to the full the sick sense of failure and its bitter cost, he must have been nearly intolerable in those days.

Deedes unconsciously sums up all the criticism which can be levelled against Sir Ian and against the conduct of the campaign in the note of a conversation with George Lloyd on the evening of August 24th: ". . . When criticizing the whole war I always come back to the before-the-war days and lay the whole blame for *all our* misfortunes on the country itself, for refusing to be woken, and on those in power in particular for refusing to try and wake them. All our errors now have their root in

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our pre-war unpreparedness. *You can't run an Empire on gallantry.*"<sup>1</sup>

Under the same date also he records a significant conversation with Sir Ralph Glyn, who had been sent out by the Foreign Office and arrived on August 13th, in the middle of the disastrous fighting: ". . . In the evening had a walk and a long talk with Ralph Glyn and a review of the situation. He hopes they will not accelerate the evacuation of Suvla. . . . I said I thought a *sine quâ non* is that our Chief should be changed—the troops have lost confidence in him. . . . The terrible point of the whole business is our *enormous* losses, and the fact that one knows that in any operation like a *withdrawal*, apart from the damaging *moral* effect, you have to make up your mind to sacrifice one-third of your troops and possibly much stores. The knowledge that in a withdrawal like that *some* troops have to be *last* and then to be sacrificed is, I think, a terrible idea—and it must be many years since British troops had to *withdraw* from anywhere.

"It can be imagined with all this where the spirits of those who know are today. . . ."

Where Deedes' spirits were, in spite of an ineradicable habit of reserve which extends even to entries in his private diary, is plain to see, and the very trick of underlining certain crucial words, such as "*enormous*", "*withdrawal*", "*last*", gives an indication of the stress under which he was labouring: these were the thoughts that hammered on his brain and his pencil drove them deep into the paper before him.

But in the meantime Sir Ian could write, "We have lost a lot of men and can only hope the Turks have lost as many" (August 22nd); and again (August 23rd): "Today it has been up to us to try and bring home to the Higher

<sup>1</sup> Those words were written in 1915 in the second year of that war, but they might well have been written in the winter of 1939, the first year of this!

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Direction the possible effect of trying to do two things at once, *i.e.* break through in France and break through here. We are to stand aside for a month or so just when we have made a big gain of ground but not the decisive watershed gain. . . .<sup>1</sup>

"So Dawnay, who is making a name for himself as a master of plain business diction, was told off to draft me an answer to the War Office which should remove as many beams as possible out of their optics. He overdid it: the whole tone of it indeed was despondent, so much so that, as I told Braithwaite, a Secretary of State for War getting so dark a presentment of our prospects would be bound to begin to think it might be better to recall the whole expedition. So I rewrote the whole thing myself. . . ." Since the telegram drafted by Dawnay on June 4th, Sir Ian had firmly attached to him the label "pessimistic", but this time even he had his doubts, for he adds, "What is the plain truth, is it in Dawnay's draft or my message?"<sup>2</sup>

There was no doubt at all in the minds of the younger members of his Staff and of some of his best generals. They saw the situation with a desperate clarity: the British and French troops still penned on the narrow southern strip of the Peninsula, worn out with fighting and being wasted by disease in their insanitary and fly-infested trenches, from which there was no respite to rest-billets. Nor were there any fresh troops to take their places in the line and give them some chance of recovering their health and their morale, while the Turks were still strongly entrenched on the key positions which alone could give command of the Peninsula. And, to add to the anxieties of the moment, it appeared very probable that Bulgaria, seeing the failure of the Entente Armies in Gallipoli and the dead-

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton, *Gallipoli Diary*, vol. ii, p. 133. Sir Ian had asked for 50,000 fresh troops and 45,000 drafts on August 16th, and had been told by Kitchener that they could not be spared till after Joffre's September offensive.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

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lock in France, would decide to throw in her lot with the winning side and assist Germany and Turkey by an attack on Serbia. At this juncture Sir Ian so far recognized the gravity of the political, as separate from the military situation, as to allow George Lloyd to go to Athens to see Sir Valentine Chirol, who had written to Lloyd about the possible *débâcle* in the Balkans in a tone of great despondency. Lloyd was only away for a few days, but there is an interesting note of Deedes on his return which gives some insight into the diplomatic difficulties, as well as the diplomatic short-comings of the Foreign Office : " August 31st. George Lloyd came back from Athens . . . saw the Minister, Valentine Chirol, his secretary Gregory and Venezélos. Chirol, who had just come from Sofia, put him in possession of the whole Balkan diplomatic history since beginning of war. As result, G. L. said he felt less bitter against the F.O. now that he knew the facts. He thought we had not done so badly in Serbia. Our offer to her was able and clever but the Serbs, who seemed to be so absolutely without logic in this matter and obsessed with the idea of winning back the 'Macedonias', would appear to prefer to cease existing as a nation (rather) than give up any part of Macedonia won from Bulgaria during Balkan war, and that in spite of having been offered vast territories north. Our great mistake in S. was having negotiated direct with Russia as to how much we would give away of Serbia South, back to Bulgaria, without mentioning it ever to Serbia, who was left to find it out from German agents ! "

These territorial claims of the Balkan States were certainly a ticklish matter, for the note continues : " He saw Venezélos, who was very charming — as usual very loud in his praises of England and quite sincere. Said definitely that if Bulgaria marched against Serbia, Greece would march . . . of course, by our offer of Kavala to Bulgaria

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we have come very near to estranging Greece altogether, added to our vigorous contraband policy — which I fancy is carried out as tactlessly as one might expect.”

An acid comment, but the British policy in the Balkans does indeed appear to have been fumbling in the extreme ; we all but estranged Greece without winning Bulgaria and, within a few months of the time when Deedes penned these lines, the whole territory of Serbia was in enemy hands. It must, however, be remembered that in all these territorial negotiations the susceptibilities of Russia had to be taken into account and, diplomatically, Russia was an expensive partner.

With the storm clouds just about to break over the Balkans, with the Expeditionary Force pinned to its narrow and precarious foothold on the Peninsula, Lloyd, Dawnay and Deedes decided that something drastic must be done. Dawnay had been sent to Athens with Lloyd for a few days' rest because he “had been completely knocked out by his hard work and bitter disappointment”. He was burdened, too, with a sense of hopelessness. He had long felt — ever since the failure of the attack on June 4th, indeed — that success was not to be won on the Peninsula, the odds against us were too heavy, the country too difficult, communications too uncertain. In his view, to maintain in those cramped trenches troops to be wasted by disease, or to throw them in assault against an enemy who had all the advantages of position was to deny ourselves the advantage conferred by sea-power. Sea-power enables its possessor, first, to make a descent from the sea upon some vulnerable point and, secondly, to break away if the descent should fail. But in putting forward these views, with which he says Deedes was in accord, after June 4th, he incurred the accusation of being what we should now call defeatist, and so all the expositions of that logical and yet imaginative mind were discounted. It was murmured in G.H.Q. that he had lost his

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nerve, a suggestion not borne out in any note made by Deedes, who knew him well, nor by his brilliant work as Deputy C.G.S., in the Palestine campaign. But doubtless the feeling that his chiefs *refused* to face the facts of the military situation, and his knowledge of what such refusal might mean in the way of useless and protracted slaughter, may have made him short-tempered !

In three days anyway he "came back much better", came back, too, "determined that someone must go home and give the facts to the Cabinet ; someone who knows and who has the whole sequence of events from the beginning in his mind ; someone who won't mind speaking the *truth*. Only possible two are himself and Aspinall. Meeting between G. L., G. D. and self as to how to bring this about. Decided *coûte que coûte* that it must be done, at the risk of being kicked out for meddling. All feel, however, decision now being taken at home is not a local one regarding this force but imperils and will affect India, Egypt and our very existence. At home they have never been told the facts in any telegrams or dispatches from here — *vide* the King's words. . . .— Sir Ian doesn't give me much confidence but he seems very optimistic (doesn't understand of course, only about three people do know what the real gravity of the situation here today is)."

They set about their task with courage and vigour, knowing the risks they ran of being "kicked out", and with the whole weight of Army tradition to restrain junior officers from giving a piece of their mind to their seniors. But they did it.

"September 3rd. G. L. saw Sir Ian yesterday, refused to be turned out after five minutes, got Sir Ian interested about his visit to Athens, then got on to the situation here and finally took off the gloves, sat down in his chair, and thoroughly frightened Sir Ian with his views both about affairs in the Balkans and here, and said that he thought it

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vital Sir Ian should send home one of his Staff to answer questions to the Cabinet.

“Meanwhile Dawnay approached the C.G.S. — by dint of this procedure each subsequently spoke to the other without knowing that the seed had already been laid in the other’s mind . . . the ruse succeeded and at 11 P.M. Dawnay, who had had to play one or two very high cards to get the C.G.S. to agree, came to my tent and said he himself was to go today by the *Imogen*! G. L. and self delighted. We had determined either D. or Aspinall should go. The point being that neither dispatches nor telegrams from here represent the case as it is. They are all written in the sanguine, optimistic vein — which is again due to nothing but, on the one hand, we firmly believe, ignorance and inability to grasp the truth and, on the other, the desire to keep up the semblance of a rosy situation to enable certain people to keep their seats!”

The gloves are off with a vengeance now, as these lines show, but in the concluding sentence lies the justification, if justification were needed, for the bitter nature of these criticisms. And it throws into relief the motive which inspired these three young men, a noble motive, untainted by personal ambitions or personal enmities.

“. . . G. L. and Dawnay and I determined, for the sake of the hundred thousand men out here, that the *truth* should be known.”



## Chapter Fourteen

SO Dawney went home in the *Imogen* to report and the Expeditionary Force settled down to wait on events. No further British and French attack was possible, and it was indeed fortunate that the Turks had also suffered very heavily, since, at that moment, the invaders would have been hard put to it to repel anything in the nature of a determined assault with their depleted battalions, all under strength and all under tone with the bitter disappointment and the insidious weakness due to dysentery.

At home, meanwhile, this very critical situation was handled with that lack of clear purpose which too often characterized the actions of the war. The difficulties of the British Government are not to be underrated: French and British military opinion held that only in France could a decision be reached and Joffre was preparing a great offensive for September. He promised the British Government that if, after the first week's fighting, he found he could spare them, he would send four French Divisions to the Dardanelles, embarking them on October 10th.

But events would not stand still till October 10th. By September 20th both Bulgaria and Greece were mobilizing (Deedes heard of it on September 24th), and Venezélos had asked that a hundred thousand British and French troops should be sent to Salonika to encourage Greece in giving aid to Serbia should the latter be invaded by Bulgaria. Venezélos was also prepared, in the teeth of great opposition from his own people, to cede Kavala to Bulgaria, in order

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to remove one of the chief bones of contention between the two countries. But once again the Entente action was half-hearted. Sir Ian was ordered to dispatch two Divisions from Gallipoli, one British and one French,<sup>1</sup> which was an insufficient force for the operations round Salonika and yet brought a dangerous weakness to the position on Gallipoli. Even in the matter of sending these troops the affair was bungled. The British Minister at Athens was not informed of the step until after the first detachments had arrived, and then, hearing that General Hamilton was there — Hamilton happening to be the name of the General in Command — thought it was Sir Ian in person and was naturally more than ever apprehensive of the situation in Gallipoli. This move, far from encouraging the Greeks, caused the greatest apprehension to the King and to the powerful anti-Venezélos party which supported him; they argued, not unnaturally, that the force was insufficient for effective aid and might merely have the effect of releasing most of the Turkish Army from Gallipoli. They were also inclined to believe that the troops had really been sent in order to *coerce* the Greeks and Serbians into accepting the Bulgarian terms. So great was the confusion that, to quote Deedes, “Brigadier-General Hamilton and twenty officers had turned up at Salonika and gone to the Consulate to get orders and, finding none, repaired to a hotel! This the vanguard of the Allied troops to Macedonia!” Some of the French troops, indeed, were actually turned back by the Greeks, because no instructions concerning them had been received.

“On October 5th”, writes Deedes, “comes a telegram stating [that] Russia had sent Bulgaria an ultimatum. Same evening a ‘very urgent’ wire from Minister that Venezélos had just handed in his resignation to the King.” Then follows the next sentence in ironic juxtaposition: “King’s

<sup>1</sup> Deedes says three Divisions, two British and one French.

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Messenger brings me a letter from R. Glyn, in which he seems pleased at the turn things have taken in the Balkans. At time of writing evidently thinks a Balkan bloc possible and hemming in of Bulgaria ! ”

On whatever date that letter was written the Allies had already missed the tide. On October 9th General Mackensen entered Belgrade ; on October 11th Bulgaria invaded Serbia ; Ūskŭg fell on the 22nd and Nish on the 2nd of November. So the German-Bulgar bloc was formed, the road was open for German supplies to pour down into Constantinople and the help of Greece had been thrown away.

Throughout these weeks it is the diplomatic events which bulk largely in Deedes' diary ; on the military side he reports “ great stagnation — even in our office ”, but, discouraged and apprehensive as he was, his mind was still open to the possibilities of action in his own sphere. This, it is clear from many entries, he did not consider was limited to counter-espionage but included all means by which close co-operation could be maintained between the widely scattered British and French units in Gallipoli, Egypt and the Balkan capitals. He never ceased, from the inception of the campaign to its close, to deplore the chasm of ignorance that separated the military and diplomatic representatives, and to strive by all means in his power to throw across it even the frailest of bridges. Enough of his notes have been quoted to show how constant was this preoccupation. But he was also striving continually to strengthen the links between Egypt and the Expeditionary Force, and between the French and British officers.

As early as May 8th he writes : “ I tried to impress on Dawnay the great necessity of sending [them] plenty of information to Egypt from which to write their Press communiqués. Situation in Egypt I believe to be none too healthy and getting somewhat less healthy owing to the lack

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of news from here . . . streams of British wounded and no prisoners won't improve the political situation in Egypt ! ”

On September 12th he notes : “ Newcombe<sup>1</sup> came up from Cairo. Arranged that he and Tyrrell should be invited to tea with the Chief — latter, however, not very interested in Newcombe's news. I had hoped to make Chief see that a closer touch with Cairo should be attempted, on account of what was doing in the Arab world — but the water-tight compartment system seems engrained in all our departments.”

This narrowness of outlook appeared ineradicable, as appears in another significant entry :

“ July 3rd. . . . Saron<sup>2</sup> came over from Seddülbahir — much discussion with him — sat him on one side of the C.G.S. at dinner, self on other, hoping to interest C.G.S. French so weak, however, couldn't get far — the number of those knowing French on the Staff is *very* few.”

In that fact alone there was an unhappy augury for the close collaboration essential in this difficult and anxious campaign.

But the sands were running out, the decision had to be taken as to whether yet another attempt should be made to seize the Straits and reach Constantinople or whether the Expeditionary Force should be evacuated.

Dawnay was back on Imbros by October 13th. Whilst in England he had seen the King, the Prime Minister, Sir Edward Grey, Sir Edward Carson, Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Winston Churchill and Kitchener. From letters which he wrote to Aspinall, who showed them to Deedes, he seems to have had an attentive and indeed sympathetic hearing from nearly all. He was a good envoy to send, highly intelligent, an able expositor, and blessed with a charm of

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Newcombe, who helped in the making of the Arab Revolt and is spoken of in Lawrence's book *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. He was later captured by the Turks.

<sup>2</sup> Head of the French Intelligence at Gallipoli.

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manner which often goes far to help down unpalatable truths. The nervous tension with which, after Suvla, he was taxed by Sir Ian and others was certainly not apparent by the time he reached England — in all probability because now at last he felt that he could do something for the hundred thousand men out in Gallipoli and that, whatever the final decision of the Cabinet as to evacuation, he could at least ensure that these brave men should not be muddled into disaster. He told Deedes that he was surprised at the close knowledge of the events in Gallipoli shown by the King, the Prime Minister, Sir Edward Grey and some others, but that, on the other hand, “he was aghast at the fog of war, lack of grip and want of direction”.

With Kitchener he crossed swords and was quite fearless in his contest with that tremendous figure. When summoned by Kitchener to give his report he told him that the evacuation of the whole Expeditionary Force was inevitable — that he, Dawnay, believed it should have been withdrawn in June, after the failure to gain Krithia and Acibaba, and that the disaster of Suvla now left him without a shadow of a doubt. Kitchener interrupted him with, “But this is a monstrous statement!” to which Dawnay replied, “It’s a fact. If you send more troops now there will be nowhere to put them; you will have them shelled off the beaches. There is no room for digging the necessary assembly trenches without making the whole of the area we occupy just one great hole; and who is to do the digging?”

At the time Kitchener treated this statement with contumely and Dawnay himself with scant patience, but on November 22nd, when he had come out to Gallipoli to see for himself the terrain, the tired troops, the long lines of communications, the huddled trenches and the narrow beaches, he held a conference with Sir Charles Monro,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Major-General Sir Charles Monro, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.S.I., sent to replace Sir Ian at the end of October. He exactly confirmed Dawnay’s view.

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Braithwaite and Birdwood, during which the pregnant decision to evacuate was taken. During the conference members of the Staff, among whom were Dawnay and Deedes, waited outside the room in tense anxiety. The door opened and the four men came out, headed by the square-hewn bulk of Kitchener. He walked straight up to Dawnay, fixed him with those hard blue eyes and said, "Young man, you were right!"

This story was told to me by General Dawnay as an example of a certain grand magnanimity of which Kitchener was capable, not of his own intrepidity. But it illustrates the one as well as the other.

Dawnay also saw Winston Churchill at the House of Commons — no longer in office, it must be remembered, but a serving soldier. There was at that time, and for many years afterwards, a tendency to impute the blame for the failure of this campaign to him personally and almost exclusively, and he was, when he saw Dawnay, suffering from the bitterness of his frustrated plans and his elimination from the Admiralty. He talked to Dawnay about the Dardanelles and told him that he could and would have got to Constantinople with the loss of twelve ships<sup>1</sup> and that, when this proved impossible because the Government would not face such a loss, he was ready to cry off the whole thing. "I don't quite believe this from my own evidence", says Deedes, and certainly Churchill never ceased to be aware of the strategical value of the Dardanelles, though perhaps at that moment, sickened by the obstructions and intrigues, he may have thought he would have been glad to let the whole thing go.

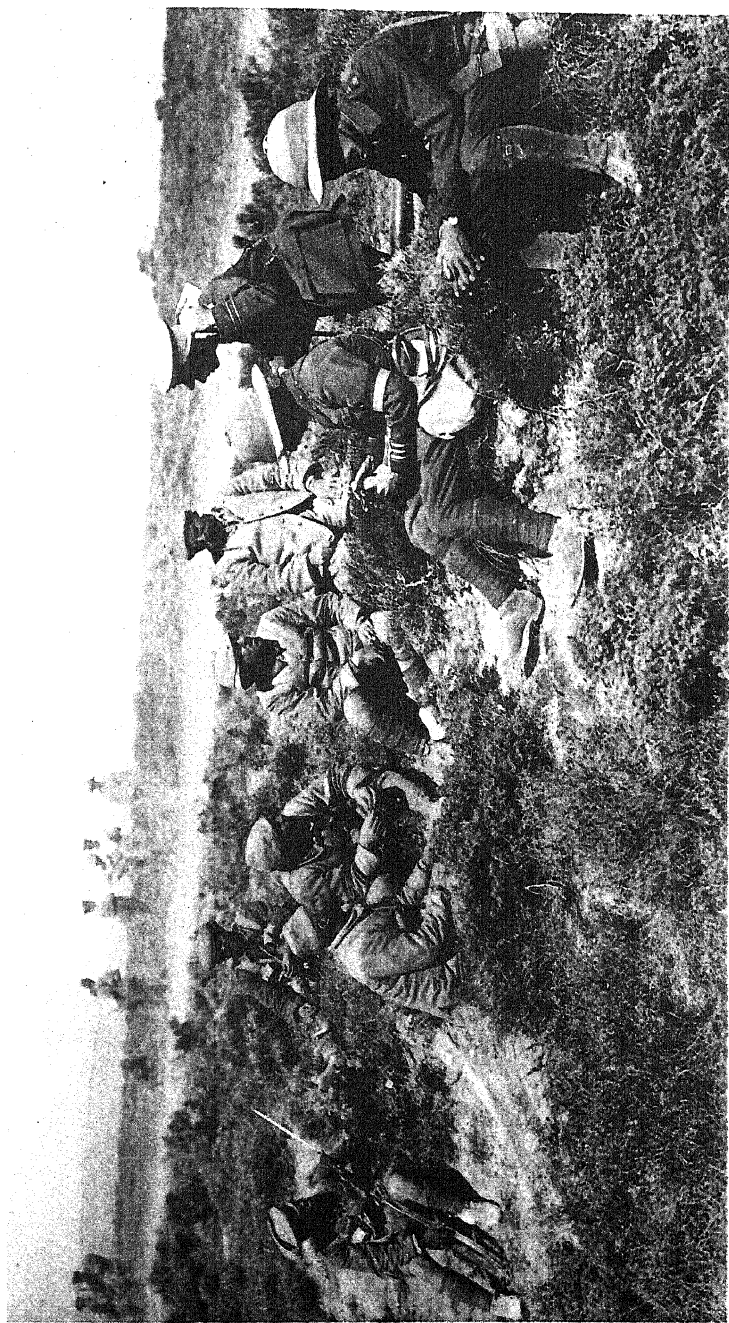
But as Deedes and Dawnay talked, discussing this personality and that, the hollowness beneath some be-

<sup>1</sup> German Military historians support this view and consider that had the naval attack been vigorously prosecuted on March 19th and 20th, in spite of the losses on March 15th, the road to Constantinople would have been open.

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ribboned uniforms, the feet of clay revealed in the people's idol, Kitchener, Deedes said to Dawnay, "And I bet the best you found was Winston after all!"

And there the diary ends, abruptly, on October 13th. The last page of the child's penny exercise-book, or of the loose and crumpled sheets which accompany it, is reached, though two months were to elapse before the evacuation from Anzac and Suvla, and nearly three before that from Helles was completed. If one has traced the course of events, page by page of the hasty pencilled handwriting, through the eight months from February to October, one feels a queer sense of loss when there are no more pages to turn. Without the least conscious attempt at character study, without grace of style or literary effort, these frank, voluminous and absolutely honest notes do build up in the mind of the reader a strangely complete knowledge of the men who acted in that drama and of the events which they shaped or by which they were defeated. When one has laid it aside there remain in the memory pictures of De Lisle, sick with anxiety, and of Sir Ian sitting alone by himself on a little hill, as they awaited the last attack; of Stopford on the *Jonquil*, tired but happy, with his leg stretched out on a chair to rest his knee, while victory set for ever behind the heights of Ismailoğlu; of Aspinall, his handsome face distorted with grief and anger as he faced the complacency of his senior officer; of Hunter-Weston, gallant, noisy and tactless, elbowing his way through the cobwebs of officialdom in H.Q. at Cairo; and of Deedes, slight, neat, reserved, listening with one ear to *La Tosca* and with the other to Sir Thomas Cunningham, fulminating against the obscurantism of those in command. There is another picture of Deedes, climbing out of the British trenches under a white flag to deliver to a Turkish officer in no-man's-land a reply to a request for an armistice to bury the dead, and of the



W. D. questioning Turkish prisoners, Gallipoli, 1915





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pair of them standing there, among the unburied and rotting corpses, to smoke a cigarette together and talk about men whom both called their friends, and to comment gravely and dispassionately on the war. From the scattered sentences, or even half-sentences, that occur frequently and sometimes irrelevantly throughout these pages, the scene shapes itself with a vividness which owes nothing to art. One learns to know so much about the weather of those months ; of a lovely day, of spring flowers carpeting the ground round the shell-wrecked walls of Seddülbahir ; of the horrible high wind and dust and flies which were the constant accompaniment of too much of the summer ; of the bleached curve of W beach, with its crowd of troops and Greek workmen, canteens, latrines and transport ; of the majesty of the great ships that advanced up the Straits on March 18th ; of the crowded harbour at Mudros, with the coming and going of every kind of craft, even to the picket-boat in which sat the French Staff officer who would not come aboard Sir Ian's ship in the boisterous weather, but remained where he was, and was sick ! How, looking back over those pages, one feels as if one had entered into contact with the life of those days in a manner which cannot be reached through literary art, for here it all is, the trivial with the grandiose, the relevant with the irrelevant, set down higgledy-piggledy as the moment presented it — as the moment does always present the event to those who live through it.

And then suddenly, all finishes, the tale is left incomplete. What becomes of Sir Ian and Hunter-Weston ; of Y. and K. ; of the suspect Greeks who ran the canteen and all the rest of those dubious characters they called "Deedes' Brigands", who plied between the islands and knew the creeks and coves where a submarine could hide if she came in to refuel, who knew also into which palm coins could slip, and in which they would disappear without result ?

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What, above all, becomes of the 'Three Musketeers, one or the other of whose names occur on almost every page of the diary? No use to give the bare facts: that Sir Ian was recalled to England on October 14th, to be replaced by Sir Charles Monro; that George Lloyd went home early in October *en route* for Russia, to discuss the matter of coal supplies; that Aspinall, after the evacuation, was sent to France and there distinguished himself; that Dawnay remained in Egypt and was at first on the Staff of Sir Archibald Murray<sup>1</sup> and later was Deputy Chief of Staff to Allenby,<sup>2</sup> in Palestine. They disappear from Deedes' life when they disappear from the pages of the diary. True it is that he saw Dawnay quite often in Palestine and that there are letters among his correspondence from Aspinall, while he continued to meet Lord Lloyd, until the latter's death. But the circumstances which bound these men together, the web in which they were enmeshed and which gave to their relationship its particular quality, was unravelled when they turned their backs on that narrow strip of land, honeycombed with trenches and thick with graves, and though friendship might remain it was of a different order.

This adventure was over; Gulliver's Travels were at an end.

<sup>1</sup> General Sir Archibald Murray, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., D.S.O.

<sup>2</sup> General Sir Edward Allenby, later Viscount Allenby of Megiddo, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

## *Chapter Fifteen*

ONCE asked Deedes why he broke off at this point a record of so much interest which he had kept in detail, and under conditions of stress, overwork and personal danger, throughout so many months. He replied that he now had to consider the chances of a document containing so great an amount of information falling into enemy hands. It was not impossible, he said, that any one of the Staff might be taken prisoner, or that all their belongings might have to be left behind in a retreat. This reply gives the measure of the gravity of the situation in which the Expeditionary Force now found itself, for if it is a hazardous operation to land troops in the teeth of enemy opposition, it is, military writers agree, even more dangerous to withdraw them in face of an undefeated enemy. The grim estimate of the loss of one-third of the force, and possibly one-half, had to be reckoned with by Kitchener when, in November, at Mudros, he reached the decision to evacuate Gallipoli.

It is now a matter of common knowledge that in this, the most brilliant of all the operations of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, not a man nor a gun was lost in the withdrawal from Anzac and Suvla between December 8th and December 20th, nor in that from Helles, on the 8th and 9th January. Further, nearly all the horses and mules and a fair proportion of stores were also saved. It is all the more to be regretted that one can no longer follow in Deedes' diary the day-by-day planning and replanning, hazards,

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disappointments and triumphs, more especially since the function of Intelligence now became of the highest importance. For an essential condition of evacuation, if withdrawal was not to be turned into rout, was secrecy, and though rumours were rife enough the truth never leaked out, even in the last evacuation of all, from Helles, when the major part of the force had gone, and the enemy knew for certain that some dark night the troops would go from Helles. Of the stratagems used by the fighting men, of the fire kept up all along the line by skeleton formations and guns that could be fired from a distance or automatically, highly ingenious booby-traps, the official history tells something, but nothing as to how this huge movement of men and material was effected without spies learning of it and communicating it to the enemy, and it must be remembered that on the Peninsula there were, besides the British and French troops, Greek and Cretan workmen, canteen-workers and guides ; that the withdrawal was not only from the Peninsula but also from Imbros, the site of G.H.Q., from Mudros, the main supply base, from Mitylene, Tenedos and Scyros. In all these places there was not only the local population of which to take account, but there was also a constant coming and going of fishermen, peasants peddling their wares, traders with supplies for the canteens, shepherds roaming with their flocks, any one of whom might be in a position to observe the great preparations necessary for evacuation and communicate it to the enemy.

When I asked Deedes how they stopped the leak from so many possible sources, he answered that Intelligence by that time had a pretty good idea of who was a hundred per cent trustworthy and who was not, and that they rounded up and temporarily interned on one small island all those about whom they had a doubt, and even some of those about whom they had not, "to be on the safe side". But of the

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details of this remarkable feat he could tell me nothing because he had stowed it away in some odd lumber-room of his memory as over and done with and therefore of no further interest — his incurable habit in matters relating to the past. His mind is ever looking forward, not back, and this is one of the factors which makes it so difficult to fill in the blanks from his own incomplete records. Still, the outstanding fact remains that the secret was so well kept that Liman von Sanders, writing after the war, says of the evacuation from Helles, "Here, again, the enemy was successful in his withdrawal in spite of all our watchfulness".

And there is one small note of Deedes, dated December 18th/19th, on the first evacuation, which runs: "Confidently believed to be one of the most remarkable things in history. Not the least remarkable being that the Turks never discovered we were going. Reflects no small credit, it is felt, on the Secret Service."

Recognition of this remarkable feat was apparently slow in coming. In the official history of the campaign, so generous in its appreciation of tactical difficulties and individual gallantry, the part played by Intelligence in the last act of the drama is passed over in complete silence. At the time, while others received the meed of praise they had well earned, it seemed to Deedes that his work had been ignored. He entered the war with the rank of Captain and was still a Captain at the beginning of 1916. For all his unworldliness he was hurt and allows himself a little grumble — almost the only personal grumble during the whole war, and then only in a letter to his most intimate correspondent, his mother. Even then, he asked her to destroy the letter. Fortunately she did not, and I have felt justified, after the lapse of so many years, in quoting it, since it is one of the few records of this period, 1914-1918, which show the purely human side of Deedes and soften the

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austerity of his outline with an endearing touch of human weakness.<sup>1</sup>

Writing on January 15th, 1916, he says: "There is one point I am going to mention as I am only writing to you and B.,<sup>2</sup> and that is, *tout carrément*, the recognition I have received for my services. . . . When you remember that we evacuated the Peninsula without information reaching the enemy that we were going to do so, when you remember that the landing at Suvla in August was a complete surprise, when you remember our position, occupying the Peninsula and half a dozen islands, having against us the best that Turkish and German espionage could produce, and when you note that I was solely responsible, not only for the work of our own agents, but for the far more responsible work of defeating the enemy agents . . . you may perhaps allow that one is worthy of recognition . . . the reason?<sup>3</sup> A not uncommon one — my work has been conducted, necessarily, for the most part entirely without anyone's knowledge but my own — the Big System established by myself is unknown to all but one or two — no C.G.S. or civilian has ever enquired into it. Well, that's enough, as between you and me and B. . . ."

He was, however, mistaken in thinking his work had passed unnoticed. He had been mentioned in dispatches on September 15th and December 11th; on January 6th he received the D.S.O. (this, of course, he did not know when writing on January 15th), was again mentioned in dispatches on January 29th and, though he was not named, the work of Intelligence received its meed of praise in *The Times* of December 31st, in an article on the evacuation of Suvla and Anzac by Ward-Price. But it was from his friend

<sup>1</sup> I think, also, that his mother would have been glad for me to quote this letter, since she had preserved it.

<sup>2</sup> His brother.

<sup>3</sup> For not receiving recognition.

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Dawnay that came the chief satisfaction of knowing that his services had not been overlooked.

On January 18th he told Dawnay that he was being transferred to the Intelligence Service of Egypt, and Dawnay said that he was quite right to take it up, but hoped it did not mean he was going to cut himself off from England after the war and remain in the Army.

"From that", continues Deedes, "he went on to say how sorry they would be when I went, how the C.G.S. regretted it, how . . . I(B) as run by myself at Medforce was, they considered, the best Secret Service section that had ever been run and, in a word, he told me that the work was fully recognized and he would show me letters home on the subject one day. . . . All this I don't deny was most gratifying, because I really began to wonder, as I had heard nothing, whether my work had not been a failure."

One other personal anecdote may be gleaned from the barren records of those months from October to December. It has to do with Kitchener and is very similar to the story concerning Dawnay.

While Deedes was still at the War Office, and when the project of forcing the Dardanelles by naval action was first mooted, Kitchener sent for him, as being familiar with that terrain and with Turkish conditions, and asked him to state his views. Deedes replied — and later noted in his diary on February 17th — that he thought the proposal unsound, for even if the Fleet forced the Straits and reached Constantinople it would be at the mercy of the Turks unless supported by an army, since the Turks could cut off all supplies, close the Straits and bottle up the Fleet in narrow and dangerous waters, between Turkey in Europe and Turkey in Asia. Kitchener abruptly told him that he did not know what he was talking about! A humiliating rebuff for a young man and a junior officer.

But when Kitchener came out in November, saw the



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nature of the country and the perilous Narrows, commanded by the Turkish guns, and made up his mind to evacuation, he sent for Deedes, recalled their conversation of nine months earlier and apologized handsomely for his failure to appreciate the force of Deedes' remarks. It must be rare indeed for a man in Kitchener's position, and with his prestige, to go out of his way twice, in the course of a few days, to make the *amende honorable* to a subordinate.

Deedes' notes — no longer, alas! a consecutive diary but scattered jottings, sometimes written in shorthand, sometimes in longhand — begin again on December 17th. He is not in an optimistic frame of mind. After the hazards of the evacuation and the knowledge of failure which must have been a bitter draught for all those who had witnessed the tremendous efforts, the unavailing gallantry and the cruel loss on the Peninsula, he had to face the fact that on the Western Front a quarter of a million men had been sacrificed in the September offensive, without bringing victory nearer; that Bulgaria had entered the war on the side of the Central Powers; that Serbia was overrun; that Greece was estranged, largely by the ineptitude of Entente diplomacy, and that the Belgrade-Sofia-Constantinople railway was now available for the passage of men and materials from Germany.

To arrive in Egypt, with these thoughts clouding the mind and after nine months of a bitter and unsuccessful campaign, was a strange and, to Deedes, a shocking experience. In Egypt there was a large British force in occupation to meet the threat of attack by the Turks on the Canal and by the tribes of the Senussi on the Western frontier, from Libya, but the ordinary activities of life, its business, its pleasures, its social intercourse went on unchanged in the crowded cosmopolitan centres of Cairo and Alexandria. They are at all times wealthy cities, a good deal of the trade of the Levant passes through

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Alexandria and the standard of luxury among its rich merchants is of a baroque magnificence before which that of New York and Hollywood seems pale. An American friend of mine, who made this comparison, said that she had been entertained at a mansion carpeted throughout in white velvet and had visited a country house, situated in the desert, where there was not only a flowery garden, tree-shaded, but a swimming-pool in which the guests might disport themselves, the water for these amenities being supplied from an Artesian well sunk to heaven knows what depth, or at what cost.

And when Deedes reached Egypt, on December 30th, 1915, money was flowing more freely than ever from the Army of Occupation, not only in the impressive sums which had officially to be disbursed, but from the pockets of every private soldier, pushing his way through the crowded bazaars and tempted by the unfamiliar Oriental goods as mementoes for home.

The hotels were crowded with officers, all very spick-and-span, and many of them, seemingly, with little to do. To the weary men just back from Gallipoli, where the lack of reinforcements had been a heartbreaking preoccupation throughout the campaign, the easy-going crowds of soldiers were a bitter spectacle, and Deedes writes with asperity, "If officers have time to play polo they could obviously be put somewhere else". Nor were the officers unaccompanied. The whole place, he says, is swarming with women; there were wives, sisters and sweethearts, V.A.D.s, whose duties were as yet by no means onerous, society ladies who had some little nominal job on the strength of which they had come out to winter in Egypt, and ladies not of society, gilded adventuresses who settled like a swarm of bright flies near this huge concentration of males. Everyone seemed to be having a good time, and from a letter or two of Deedes, and a few scattered notes, one

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can form a picture of him, his eyes hardened and his long top lip grown longer, as he watched this bright crowd enjoying itself against the dark background of possible defeat which at that time was never far absent from his mind.

The arrival of G.H.Q. Medforce in Egypt was in the nature of an anticlimax. Anzac and Suvla had been successfully evacuated; Imbros and Mudros unostentatiously depleted of all military material and left without untoward incident and, after three days' voyage in the submarine-infested waters, the Staff reached Alexandria. "We imagined", writes Deedes, "that on arrival we should have some sort of welcome from Maxwell.<sup>1</sup> Four days previous to our departure we had received a telegram from the W.O. saying that Sir Charles Monro was not to return to his army in France until he had handed over to Sir A. Murray, which he could do whenever he liked; upon which Sir Charles wired to Maxwell saying . . . that would he, Maxwell, arrange for our accommodation. Upon which Maxwell wired back that this was the first he had heard of Murray's going to Egypt and that he had arranged for G.H.Q. to go to Zagazig, the junction to the Cairo-Alexandria rail-lines, but hardly a suitable place for G.H.Q.

"Maxwell, of course, is not at all anxious to have any of us in Egypt, having a Staff of his own, and no doubt thinks himself more than competent to deal with the situation. On arrival, therefore, nothing was known of our moves and today, therefore [Dec. 31st] we have remained at the Majestic hotel doing nothing but awaiting the arrival of our Chief [Murray] which is not now, we hear, to be until January 3rd."

All the same, he enjoyed the first few days at Alexandria in peace, comfort and glorious weather, but then got bored with inactivity and went to Cairo to make contact with Colonel Gilbert Clayton and the Egyptian Intelligence

<sup>1</sup> Rt.-Hon. General Sir John Maxwell, G.C.B., D.S.O., G.O.C. in Egypt.

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Service. He stayed at Shepherd's Hotel and found again the crowds of officers and women "who seem to have nothing to do but enjoy themselves. Shepherd's hotel is more like a carnival than a war. . . ."

With Clayton, whom he had met before and for whom he had a warm liking, he soon came to an understanding, and when the respective "zones of influence" of Medforce and the Egyptian Army of Occupation were finally delimited, after some unseemly wrangling, it was arranged that Deedes was to be transferred to Egyptian Intelligence at Cairo, though, as he says in a subsequent note, there had been a "great fight over his body", and the High Commissioner, Sir Henry McMahon,<sup>1</sup> had personally to ask Sir A. Murray for his services.

By the middle of January, then, Deedes was in Cairo, working among that little group of remarkable men who made the piece of history known as the Arab Revolt, and whose names figure in the incomparable prose of Lawrence's story. There was Sir Henry McMahon, who first conceived the idea of a quasi-political, quasi-intelligence service, now always known as the Arab Bureau; there was Ronald Storrs, imaginative, versatile and restless; Gilbert Clayton, formerly of the Sudan Agency, and the immediate chief and closest associate of Deedes in this work; D. G. Hogarth, Lawrence's spiritual godfather, with his encyclopaedic knowledge of the Near and Middle East; the Sirdar, Sir Reginald Wingate; Robert and Philip Graves; Leonard Woolley, whose fate it was to be captured by the Turks on an expedition along the coast on which Deedes sent him, but who survived it to become the excavator and historian of Ur; Aubrey Herbert; George Lloyd, back again from Russia, impatient of red tape and not adopting an attitude of meekness towards those in high places; Newcombe,

<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry McMahon, G.C.M.G., K.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., First High Commissioner in Egypt.

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whose capture by the Turks and romantic escape have been written of elsewhere ; and, finally, T. E. Lawrence himself.

The relation between Deedes and Lawrence is one of the curiosities of this piece of history. They met frequently, they knew each other's work intimately, but each hardly ever mentions the other's name. In *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, crammed as it is with rich portraiture of many men who played their part on that stage, Deedes' name occurs only twice, and then perfunctorily ; once with the half-sentence "friendly and helpful as ever" ; on the other occasion as having been encountered with Dawnay. Yet, after the war, Lawrence saw Deedes frequently in Palestine, in 1921. It appears from Mrs. Deedes' letters that he was a frequent visitor at their flat in Government House and would even, on occasion, storm his way past the butler's "Not at home" in order to see Deedes or to have a meal — one of his minuscule meals, like Deedes' — and a gossip with Mrs. Deedes.

As for Deedes himself, though Lawrence's name appears frequently in the notes of 1916, there is no comment which gives any indication of personality such as flashes a light, even in his economical sentences, on Ronald Storrs or Aubrey Herbert, Mukhtar Bey or Mustafa. And in these latter years it has never been possible to draw him into a discussion of that enigmatic personality. When asked to contribute to the volume in which a large number of Lawrence's contemporaries recorded their impressions of him, or their relations with him, Deedes refused, saying that he had nothing either new or relevant to add to what was known.

This mutual reserve is of special interest, since Lawrence and Deedes are the two most mysterious personalities of all that remarkable group which played out a chapter of history on the Eastern scene. They are mysterious not by virtue of their acts — the scene of Deedes' activity for two years

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was an office in Cairo — but by reason of the hidden springs of their actions, hard to understand for ordinary folk. Lawrence's withdrawal from all that the world calls desirable, from ambition, from the adulation of the public, from the love and comfort of his friends, is not so different from Deedes' withdrawal from Palestine when, at the moment of the greatest public recognition of his worth, when his future looked most brilliant, he resigned his position, left the Army, and came back to England to work in the settlement of Bethnal Green. As Lawrence sought some kind of spiritual release in the anonymity and discipline of the Air Force, Deedes sought some release in the petty squalor of a slum. He did not, perhaps, find it; circumstances have driven him back into the public eye; the claims and responsibilities of human affection have tied him in a measure to material things. But both these men are urged onwards by a tension of the spirit, inexplicable in its origins; unknown, save for brief spells, to ordinary and perhaps more fortunate mortals. Whatever it is, it will never let them rest, it keeps them for ever at a strain, runners crouched with every muscle tense, ready to leap forward in the race to some obscure goal. I doubt if either could name the Erinnys that so drive them. Once, in my hearing, Deedes let fall an illuminating and incompleted sentence: "I live for ever", he said, "on a knife-edge between——" One forbore to question that unfinished phrase, knowing that he would not, even if he could, and almost certainly could not complete it.

Physically, the two men had much in common. Both were small and fair and light in build; both thin to the point of emaciation; both tough as whipcord in endurance; both had trained their bodies by eschewing in their daily life all luxuries and many of the things most men call necessities; both could fast for long periods, do without rest, do without sleep, drive the pain-wracked body to obey

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the will ; both knew and loved the harsh desert life and the desert silences.

Yet they were born not to understand each other. Similar in so much, the inner core is essentially dissimilar. To Lawrence the world of experience with all its happenings, beautiful or sombre, grandiose or squalid, burns with an incandescent fervour ; it has the intensity and significance of poetry. To Deedes the world of experience is wrapt in lead ; it is a burden of intolerable weight which he carries from day to day because it has been ordained that he shall discharge the duty of living, but always one has the impression that he only awaits the moment when the sign shall be given that he may lay the burden down. Lawrence is a rebel, in revolt against authority, against the wrongfulness of existence, the discordant fate of man, even against himself. In reading what he has written one has the feeling that in his inner life all was deliquescent ; that every belief, every faith, all desire had two faces, and the hither face was negative, so that he did not know, and never could know, in what direction he was going till he charged full-tilt at death on a Dorsetshire road. But in the core of Deedes there is a certainty, something static and abiding, eternally alien to the wayward and glittering flights of the tragic soul of Lawrence. This is his belief in God and in a Universe in which the drama of man's spiritual life is the tragic but significant theme.

And so it comes about that these two strange figures met and passed each other by, without understanding.

## *Chapter Sixteen*

WHEN Deedes entered the Egyptian branch of the Intelligence Service, he plunged right into the midst of the huge web of intrigue which spread over the whole of the Near and Middle and Far East, with Cairo as its nexus. So tangled are the threads, so complex the issues, that it is difficult to piece together a coherent story from the scattered and incomplete notes made by Deedes. There is so much that he says, and so much that he does not say, and when one has followed up a clue and pursued it through scores of loose, and sometimes hardly legible pages of shorthand, one comes suddenly to a blank and is unable to learn the end of the story. Enough remains, however, to give an insight into a situation which is strange, and possibly unique in the annals of British history. Cairo at that time must have been the most cosmopolitan city on earth. There were the native Egyptians and their Sultan, enmeshed in the toils of Palace intrigue; there was the British administration, known to leading Egyptians and used to steering a course that would not offend their susceptibilities; there was the imposing array of officers of the British Army, not so used to handling Egyptian questions tenderly; there were rich Greek and Syrian merchants; French and Italians, long settled in Cairo or Alexandria; Germans, Russians and Rumanians. There were Turks, some loyal to the Government of Enver, some in exile because of it; there were Arabs from all quarters of the Arab world, from the Hejaz, from Palestine,



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from the Hadramaut, from Mesopotamia, from the land of the Senussi, the Libyan desert. In this vast and motley crowd there were those who dreamed of Arab independence and an Arab Kingdom ; there were Turks who dreamed of the overthrow of Enver and the restoration of a Turkish Sultan ; there were Greeks who dreamed of Smyrna, and Italians who dreamed of extending their conquest of Tripolitania, and French with their claims on Syria. And there were those who did not dream at all, but were quietly at work creating disaffection in Egypt, as well as those who were just simply drawing good pay for passing on information, and expected to draw even better. Even in the notes of Deedes, the least dramatic man on earth, a flavour of the Arabian nights disengages itself from the crumpled pages. How else should one characterize a little incident noted on June 11th that he “ put F. S. into a wooden box to overhear the conversation of one member of the Mamorrhah Revolutionary Society and one of my agents ” ? One regrets somewhat that it was not an oil-jar in which this product of Eton and Aldershot concealed his friend ! Then there was the incident of seven British officers disguised as Turks for a raid on illicit stores of arms and ammunition ; of the envoy from the Senussi, with whom the British were still at war, coming to Cairo unofficially to discuss peace terms and camping out in Clayton’s office, eating, sleeping and saying his prayers there, “ in true Oriental fashion ” ; of the Turkish prisoner who escaped with important papers but was captured at Alexandria, trying to buy Bedouin clothing in the bazaar from a man who, unfortunately for him, was in the pay of the Secret Police. Interspersed with these colourful anecdotes there are long and valuable notes on the difficulties of the Arab question, the problem of dealing with disaffection in Egypt and the divers claims of different Turkish parties, with little personal records of having dined or had tea with such a one — English, Egyptian or Turkish,

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or of a (very rare) bout of sightseeing to the Pyramids.

The work for which the High Commissioner and Colonel Clayton were anxious to secure Deedes is briefly indicated by him in a letter to his mother, dated January 15th, 1916 :

" . . . Clayton explained how, chiefly in connection with a General Bureau for Near-Eastern Turkish and Arab affairs, to be centred in Cairo under the H.C., they found themselves in want of an officer who had more of a political than a military turn of mind. . . . Cairo is devoid of any Turkish expert, not so much the language I (do not) mean, but one like myself with intimate experience, and lastly, my one and a half years in Tripoli and knowledge of that side will not be without value."

He then adds a personal note : " . . . In a word, I am to be congratulated and feel very pleased. I, the oldest member, sever my connection of ten months with Medforce with regret, but its personnel has so much changed that the parting, on these grounds, is less, and as to the work — sitting on the Canal doesn't promise to be wildly exciting."

The complexity of the problem with which he had to deal appears in the following extract, in which he sets out with admirable clarity the main factors in a situation at once confusing and dangerous :

" There are two main points on which I am now engaged as regards the Turks," he writes under the date February 21st-29th, 1916, " the first . . . dealing with the now considerably large number of those individuals whom we have collected here. The Turks belong to various shades of parties. Some are definitely opposition " — *i.e.* in opposition to the Government of Enver and Talaat — " some are old Hamidians, some would be prepared to work with the less Jingo parts of the C.U.P. [Committee of Union and Progress] such as Rahmi, some would even be prepared to co-operate with Talaat, if the latter succeeds in ridding himself of the Germans and the militant Young Turk party

and was prepared to make peace. . . . Now all these groups are most anxious to secure the co-operation of England to secure their ends. They all realize that the end of Turkey is approaching and they are all anxious that their party should inherit whatever remains."

But into this network of conflicting interests was woven an even more tangled thread : the Arab question. Deedes continues : " In addition to the Turkish parties we have some three Arab parties here :

" (1) Those representing the Syrians, who are mainly concerned with the future of Syria, and their general concern in the matter is that the French should not be allowed to go to Syria, that they should have no more at the very outside than economic and financial concessions. So great is their dislike of the French that it is very questionable that if the French were to reign today in Syria that they would not drive the Moslems straight away into the hands of the Turks. . . . It is difficult rather to account for this extraordinary dislike and, if asked, they quote Tunis and other places where the French have colonies of Moslems. The Christians too are by no means yearning for the French, in fact, with the exception of the Maronites, the Christians of Syria are as opposed to the French going there, by which I mean territorial concessions, as are the Moslems. How difficult this makes our position at the present moment is quite obvious, because we ourselves know that our F.O. have made some sort of arrangement with the French by which we believe they are to have some territorial aggrandisement. . . . News of this is only [now] reaching our friends who are continually coming to us and asking whether it is true we have sold them to the French.

" (2) We have the party of the Shereef. With this party we really are negotiating on the lines of a spiritual and temporal Arab Kingdom. That at all events is what the Shereef wants. Personally, and I think it is the view of most

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of us, and is the view of many of the Arabs and all of the Turks themselves, this idea is not a practical one. For . . . it will never be possible to get all the Arabs of Syria, Iraq, Yemen and the others to acknowledge one temporal chief, even if they acknowledge one spiritual chief. And if they were prepared to acknowledge one man the question is who is that man to be. The Shereef of Mecca's influence is accepted over a certain part of the countries named but not over others. . . . The Shereef's [party] is much the most moderate and sensible of all . . . they are very loyal to us for their own ends ; secrecy being vital they are very anxious that none other than their own party should have wind of what is going on. . . .

“(3) Finally, we have the party of Iraq. They want an independent Government for those parts and they are very anxious to get out of us now what zone we mean to allot and, if they can, what form of Government. Now our *great difficulty* is the Indian Government, who view all our flirtations with these parties with the greatest suspicion and particularly any arrangements made about Iraq, Basra and the Persian Gulf.

“What with the French and the Indian Governments our difficulties sometimes appear insuperable. It should be noted, too, that the Turkish parties, especially those that incline most to the present form of government, or who are anxious to see some form of government of the Rahmi — Prince Sabahattin type set up again in Turkey, view this Arab movement with the greatest misgiving. . . .”

In reading this short extract and in piecing together the entries of the following months, with their story of claim and counter-claim, demands and concessions, secret negotiations and sometimes open threats, one thinks of a juggler and his coloured balls, his hands always full, his eye always on the alert, with never a moment's respite if one of the balls is not to fall to the ground. Only by keeping them

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perpetually in motion can a crash be avoided and the complicated rhythm maintained.

So it was with the work of the Arab Bureau, under which title so much more than the question of Arab independence was included. There was also, as Deedes' notes have indicated, the question of conflicting Turkish claims, of the fate of Iraq and of Syria, of security in Egypt, of disaffection in the Turkish Army besieging Townshend in Kut, of German espionage in Egypt, of the grievances of Indian traders and the possible reverberations in India itself. One's surprise is not that the men who had to deal with these complexities made mistakes, but that they did not make more; not that the vexed question of the undertakings to the Arabs were in terms so general as to have given rise to bitter controversy, but that the men on the spot were, even at the time, so aware of the inherent difficulties that they withstood the pressure put on them to make more explicit promises which they might not be in a position to implement. The question of the Jewish National Home had not arisen at this moment — February–November 1916 — the High Commissioner and those around him knew nothing of it, there is not a word of it in Deedes' notes until 1917, but even without it there was a maze of diverse and distracting demands through which the Arab Bureau honestly tried to steer a course. And only too often — the simile of the juggler reverts to mind — with one hand tied behind their backs by the necessity of allowing for French and Russian interests; by the weighty objections of the Indian Government; by decrees of their own Government, to whom the problems of the Near and Middle East were but one movement in the mighty symphony of world-war.

The dangers which threatened were moreover very real; the Germans had tried, and had not yet given up hope of so doing, to preach a Holy War throughout the Moslem world, since the Turks were their Allies and they counted on

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disaffection in India and Egypt. And the Moslem world was in a ferment, the breath of nationalism had gone abroad, the Ottoman Empire was crumbling and the revolutionary spirit was directed, not against Turkish domination nor against a particular Turkish party, but against the old order of things. The British, with their vital interests in India, with their nerve-ganglia at Aden, in Southern Arabia, in the Sudan, on the Suez Canal and at Alexandria, could not be blind to the forces that were abroad; they had to consider, and as far as possible to meet, the most reasonable of the claims made by these Moslem peoples. And in Egypt the enemy was in their midst, some of the best and ablest of enemy agents were working there to create disaffection, to help the Committee of Union and Progress with money, with arms and ammunition to raise a revolution in Egypt which should turn the Egyptians into open hostility to England.

Time and again Deedes comments on the dangerous state of Egypt, on the secret traffic in arms, on the meetings of various revolutionary societies and on the many "bad characters" which gave him so much anxiety. For all the mistakes that inevitably were made, it says much for the diplomatic ability of those in Egypt that the country remained quiet, that the Moslems of Syria did not throw in their lot with their Turkish masters and that the Arabs of the Hejaz rose in revolt and fought for Allenby. And Sir Henry McMahon showed rare insight when he said of this movement, in a conversation with Deedes in August-September 1916, that his fear had always been less that it would break down, than that it would be too great and would raise difficulties for the British in the future.

Within a very few days of reaching Cairo, Deedes found himself involved in what he refers to as "*La question Arabe*". He had a long conversation with Habib Bey, a member of the Arabic secret society of the Fetah, who spoke with authority for the Syrian Arabs and was also

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influential in the counsels of all the Arabs, those of Iraq and the Hejaz included.

Deedes summarizes his conversation with Habib Bey under the following headings :

(1) The position as between H.M. Government and the Arabs.

There could be only two parties to an agreement ; one was H.M. Government and the other was the whole Arab nation. It was therefore incumbent on the various Arab parties to compose their differences, so that they could speak with one voice.

(2) The position between H.M. Government and the French.

Deedes made a clear statement of the duties and obligations of the British to their French Allies, and emphasized that the British would do nothing which might lay them open to the accusation of intriguing against the French. (This statement, of course, was in relation to the vexed question of the antipathy shown by the Syrian Arabs to the French.) He also said that the British would neither bring any pressure to bear on the French in the matter of their differences with the Arabs, nor act as spokesmen for the Arabs. It was therefore incumbent on the Arabs to make a direct approach to the French for the settlement of the differences between them.

Nothing could have been fairer or more straightforward than these statements, and it appears from the context that Habib Bey saw the force of Deedes' remarks and proposed to convene a small conference of representatives of all Arab parties to draw up a programme for submission to the British and French Governments.

Unfortunately this meeting, which might have been most valuable in preventing the obscurities which embittered

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future relations, never took place, for Habib Bey was ordered to leave Egypt within forty-eight hours. Deedes thought that it was the result of a "Palace intrigue" which caused him to be regarded as a dangerous and subversive person. The Arabs were much incensed by his treatment, and though Deedes managed to reach him by telephone at Port Said, before he sailed for Europe, and strove to remove from his mind the indignation and apprehension caused by this action, it was a sorry blunder.

Deedes wrote to Colonel Hankey, giving a précis of the whole situation, Turkish and Arab, and evidently emphasizing — though his letter is not available to me, only a note of it in his diary — his old thesis, that peace could be had with the Turks at the price of certain concessions, above all, the retention of Constantinople. He received in reply a lucid and balanced exposition of the British policy which sums up, better than any other document with which I am acquainted, the attitude of the British Government towards the intricate and sometimes opposing claims of the French and Russian Governments, and its intention honestly to fulfil its obligations to its Allies, even at the cost of continued war with the Turks, and with the necessity of maintaining a large force in the Near and Middle East.

It is impossible now to determine whether Deedes was right in his belief that the disaffection towards the Government of Enver and Talaat was so great, both within the country and without, that it could be overthrown by a Peace Party, having in their pockets the Straits and Constantinople, because there were still the Germans, with their grip on the lines of communication from Berlin to the Bosphorus, to be reckoned with. But it is one of the curious speculations of history as to what would have happened in the Middle East if the Russian Revolution, which released Great Britain from certain of her obligations in 1917, had taken place in 1916.



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At the time when Deedes was corresponding with Colonel Hankey, the position of the British in the Middle East was what he would have called "anything but rosy".

Having failed in the attempt on Gallipoli, we now had an army beleaguered at Kut, in Mesopotamia, and in a parlous condition, while Turkish troops still threatened the Suez Canal, and the tribes of the Senussi had not yet been quelled on Egypt's western frontier. Lawrence, who was not sympathetic to the Higher Command in Mesopotamia, says that we underrated the fighting qualities of the Turks because, before Basra, we had encountered a force with a high proportion of disaffected Arabs, both among the officers and men, but he does not allow for the extreme difficulties of the terrain nor for the disability under which all these Eastern expeditions suffered (until Allenby put his strong hand on the controls) of being looked upon by the majority of the War Cabinet as "side-shows".

Be that as it may, by March 1916 the position of Townshend in Kut was known to be desperate and, since there seemed no likelihood of detaching any large body of troops from the defence of Egypt for his relief, the thoughts of the British Intelligence Service turned to the possibility of capitalizing the known disaffection among the Arabs. It was common knowledge, also, that certain of the Turkish officers were venal, while others had a long-standing hatred of Enver. Kitchener therefore proposed that Deedes should be sent to Basra to enter into secret negotiations with any likely Turkish officer, and thus try to ensure that the siege was not too energetically pressed.

Deedes was most averse from going. He felt that the work which he was doing in Egypt was of high importance, and he dismissed the mission to Basra with the succinct remark, "If the Turks were purchasable, it would not matter who made the purchase!" The point, however, was pressed hard from London and on March 18th he writes :

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"Very trying day indeed. Never likely to forget it. Telegrams kept passing between ourselves and London with reference to the question of my going to Basra. Finally, we boiled the issue down to this and made it clear to London. If it was a question of buying a Turkish general at Basra, that is a thing they can do on the spot and would not require the assistance of anyone from here. . . . If on the other hand they are now prepared to consider the whole question of putting into operation Arab co-operation, such as has been proposed to us very often by the Aziz Party<sup>1</sup> and such as we have been trying for months to get the War Office to accept, in that they must be prepared to make certain concessions *now* to the Arab party and make certain promises for the future, in which case we said we would get to work so as to see what mutual arrangements could be made. . . ."

After much further exchange of telegrams, proposals and counter-proposals — Lloyd having been suggested as emissary by Cairo and refused by Kitchener — Lawrence was finally dispatched. It is curious that, in his account of this mission, Lawrence does not mention Deedes, for it was Deedes who was a hot favourite in London for the mission, and Deedes also who seems to have been instrumental in sending Lawrence.

There is a curious discrepancy between Lawrence's brief and brilliant account of the Mesopotamian situation and certain notes of Deedes. Lawrence<sup>2</sup> says that the conditions were ideal for an Arab movement, that the population in the rear of Habil Pasha's army were in revolt against him and that the Arabs in his army were openly disloyal. On the other hand, Deedes writes: "Several interesting telegrams from Lawrence, general trend of which show that purely *locally* there is no Pan-Arab or pro-war following.

<sup>1</sup> I.e. the party of Aziz-el-Misri.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, pp. 59, 60.

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This applies, I fancy, to Basra, though the Pan-Arab and pro-British is to be found further to the north at Baghdad." Both men agree, however — Deedes writing at the time, in the thick of events, Lawrence after the peace, looking back — that had the British made full use of the aspirations of the Arabs and the unmitigated sufferings and weariness of the Turkish rank and file, they could triumphantly have marched into Baghdad in 1916.

But there was confusion of counsel. The Indian Government, under Lord Hardinge, viewed with mistrust the intrusion into Mesopotamia of any mission from Egypt, and though Sir Percy Cox, the Chief Political Officer, suggested a conference of all those with interests in Moslem problems, under the presidency of Lord Hardinge, this conference never took place. Could British representatives from Basra, Cairo and Aden, together with spokesmen from the various Arab parties, have met the Indian Government, the main outlines of a policy might have been firmly drawn, the sufferings of warring peoples curtailed and many bitter controversies stilled.

All the blasts and counter-blasts of these political controversies find their echo in the rough jottings of Deedes' notes, but they remain in the background, and the major interest of these inconsecutive and sometimes inchoate records is in the momentary glimpse of the individuals who seized for a time the shuttle of fate and wove a few threads in the web of intrigue.

Among these was Aziz-el-Misri, who had aspired to be the rival of Enver, and was an exile in Egypt under the tacit protection of the British Government. Lawrence says he was an idol of the Arab officers in the Turkish Army, but those in authority regarded him somewhat as an inflated balloon, who had impressed the Arabs and certain of the Young Turks by an assumption of the science of war, supported by long quotations from Clausewitz, though his

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experience of actual war was practically nil. Later, he became Chief of Staff to the Arab Army, a position he held for a brief spell only, and by the time this present war was developing in the Middle East he was once more in Egypt. His exploit in the spring of 1941, "escaping" from Egypt by aeroplane with two companions and considerable luggage, being forced down in the desert, abandoning the plane and being finally captured, will be well remembered. It has the theatrical quality which was recognized as a characteristic twenty-five years ago.

But such a man, vain and a "poseur", is not easy to deal with, as Deedes found when he had a long talk with him and two others, on March 24th. Clayton, however, was not prepared to stand any nonsense and told Deedes to say that the British Government were not inclined at this juncture to define the relations between themselves and the Arab Government after the war, until it had been seen what kind of government the Arabs were able to produce. He was to add that ". . . we didn't consider anything that happened in Iraq at present of any importance whatever, compared with what was going on in Europe . . . that if they were not prepared to do something today instead of talk there could be no saying how much independence they would get . . . and that it was we who had done all the fighting and expenditure of blood and money".

This straight-from-the-shoulder method appears to have had a salutary effect for, after Deedes' second interview with Aziz-el-Misri, Clayton was able to telegraph to the War Office that, according to him and his party, the Arabs were now prepared to act on the promise of "Arab independence", without further definition. But various cross-currents were running strongly, confusing the issues and ultimately frustrating all plans for the relief of Townshend. An outstanding Arab personality was one Sayit Talip, very powerful in the secret society of Southern Iraq, the

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"Ahad", to which belonged many of the Arab officers in the Turkish Army. Many Arabs considered him as the most suitable man to send to Basra, but he was *persona non grata* with the Indian Government, who looked upon him as a firebrand and had interned him in India early in the war. Cairo having asked for the release of this man, whom Lawrence calls the John Wilkes of the Arab movement, and been categorically refused, prepared to send a party consisting of Aziz-el-Misri, Nuri Bey and Dr. Shabander. The latter was, according to Deedes, his great sheet-anchor, since he was wise, tactful and moderate, and also spoke excellent English, but while Deedes was busy persuading them to go together and arranging for their passage, questions were raised at Basra about the inclusion of Aziz-el-Misri. The life of the Political Intelligence Officer was made no easier by telegrams from the War Office, saying that the relief of Townshend was very urgent and the negotiating party should start from Egypt at once.

At this juncture another figure appeared on the scene, offering to do the job. This was a certain Mustafa, a real "mystery man". He had arrived in Egypt from Salonika some time in February, saying he had come from Constantinople, and offering to the British Intelligence information which he claimed had come from the very highest sources, the *entourage* of Enver and Talaat themselves. He also claimed to be a member of the Azmzade and was a Turk, but no one in Egypt knew him and he was regarded with considerable suspicion. He asked to be sent into Syria to make contact there with the Arab secret societies, and Deedes had "many long and weary conversations" with him, testing his *bona fides* and trying to find out who he was. His name, Mustafa, was of course about as revealing as the name of John for an Englishman, and he refused to give any account of himself or his background, save that he was known to Prince Sabahattin, the Turkish Pretender

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living in Athens. The information from Constantinople, however, was tested and found to be correct and valuable, so finally it was decided to trust him and Deedes dispatched him to Syria. He returned on March 26th, having been absent twenty-six days, after what Deedes at the time considered one of the most wonderful journeys of any secret agent during the war. He had reached Damascus, spoken to the Vali himself, to Turkish and even to German officers, been denounced as a spy on more than one occasion, but had escaped and turned up in Cairo with a stirring story and a taste for further adventures.

Deedes thought that, failing Sayit Talip, he might be the best man to do the job of suborning venal Turkish officers and making contact with Arab officers of the secret societies. But here the plot thickened indeed. Aziz-el-Misri knew nothing of Mustafa's projected mission and Mustafa knew nothing of Aziz-el-Misri's. Neither was likely to take kindly to the other's presence in his preserve, and Deedes had to decide whether he would let them go in ignorance and trust to both doing useful work, or inform them beforehand and chance their refusal to act together. The matter was not made easier by the fact that one was a Turk and the others were Arabs and there was likely to be no love lost between them. But Deedes decided on the latter course ; he arranged for Mustafa and Dr. Shabander to lunch amicably together ; he himself dined with Mustafa and felt that he was in a fair way to persuade both parties that in this connection their interests were identical.

And then, on March 31st, "the lid was suddenly put on the whole affair by a telegram, which had been repeated to all concerned, from Basra, saying . . . that Sir Percy Lake, and in agreement with him Sir Percy Cox, disagreed with the whole idea of sending El Misri or anyone else to Basra as, in so many words, they could not trust them. Speaking in fact, exactly as they had spoken twelve months ago and for

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which very reasons we have been able to do nothing up to date. Later in the day the High Commissioner received a telegram from the Viceroy saying he entirely concurred ! ”

Deedes and Clayton, after a discussion with the High Commissioner, agreed that they could not formally protest against this decision, since to force the hand of the man on the spot was a grave responsibility, particularly in view of the imponderable nature of the factors for success and also, and finally, because “ it is so obvious that the atmosphere of Basra is *invincible* to anything of this nature that no matter whom we send there, I don’t see how they could agree ”. With this last reason Lawrence evidently would have concurred.<sup>1</sup>

Whether Townshend could have been saved by these means or not must remain a matter of opinion, but by the middle of April the authorities at Basra were anxiously enquiring from Cairo whether Aziz-el-Misri was still available and what terms had been offered to him, since they were now prepared to let him try his fortune. This was, says Deedes, a Pyrrhic victory for him and Clayton, for Townshend was not to be saved at this eleventh hour, even if Aziz-el-Misri — to whom they had had the delicate task, a fortnight earlier, of telling him he was not wanted — could now have been dispatched.

But Kut was surrendered on April 29th, and when Lawrence came back to Cairo in the middle of May and told what he had seen of the sufferings of the beleaguered garrison and the treatment of British prisoners, there was much bitterness among those whose plans, wise or unwise, had been frustrated. But there is a curious detachment in Deedes before the spectacle of human suffering which he is unable to relieve. It is not inhumanity, though at times it has the appearance of inhumanity, it is rather a kind of armour-plate with which he protects a too-great sensitivity,

<sup>1</sup> Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

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and it is most in evidence (indeed, disconcertingly so) in the stress of disaster or before a great disillusionment. So, after the fall of Kut, when ten thousand men set out on the unspeakable misery of their *Via Dolorosa*, he quietly recorded the fact and then turned to something else.



## Chapter Seventeen

THE mysterious Mustafa was by no means finished with when the Basra project proved abortive.

It will be remembered that the only "reference" he would give Deedes when being examined as to his *bona fides* was the name of Prince Sabahattin in Athens. He now asked to be sent to him as a confidential envoy, carrying the peace terms that the British were prepared to offer, if they were such as would satisfy the majority of Turks and induce them to stop fighting.

On April 8th, therefore, Deedes drew up a note for Clayton to give the High Commissioner, in which he set out the terms which he thought would be acceptable to the main Turkish parties and to the majority of the Arabs.

Here, taken from his own notes, are the chief points contained in it :

(I) Constantinople and the Straits to remain Turkish.

From this concession, it may be noted, Deedes never departed, from the earliest entry he made in his diary on the subject, at the War Office, throughout the whole of the war. Later events have fully justified the wisdom of this provision.

(II) Apart from Constantinople and the enclave, the Turks to withdraw from Europe.

To many of the Young Turks the reconquest of the territories lost to Turkey in the Balkan wars was a cherished dream, but her disentanglement from the Macedonian imbroglio has proved to be a source of strength, not weakness. The recognition of this fact by Atatürk, and the

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manner in which he focussed his people's aspirations on Turkey as an Asiatic power, is strikingly demonstrated by the substitution of Ankara for Istanbul as the seat of Government and is an example of his rare political wisdom.

(III) Armenia to be under Russian suzerainty.

The systematic extermination of the Armenian population had been the deliberate policy of Enver, and it was hoped to give the unhappy remnant of this Christian people the protection of Russia.

(IV) Autonomous rule for the vilayets of Damascus, Aleppo and Jerusalem, but under Moslem Governments appointed by the Entente, all the Governments to be under the guarantee of the Entente Powers.

(V) For the remainder of the Ottoman Empire, the provisions of the agreement entered into by the High Commissioner and the Arab Bureau with the Shereef of Mecca.

These provisions, at the moment when Deedes was writing, were for "a spiritual and temporal independent Arab Kingdom", though the territories to be included in such a Kingdom were not then defined because of the very great difficulties presented by the varying claims of the Arabs of Iraq, of Syria and of the Hejaz.

To these terms, which Mustafa took to Athens and which were seen by the British Minister there, as well as by Prince Sabahattin, the Prince made certain counter-proposals which were sent to the Foreign Office by the High Commissioner and which are therefore not available to me. But that they were not unreasonable appears from a note by Deedes, to the effect that Sir Henry McMahon considered this was one of the most important papers he had handled since the beginning of the war. A few lines further on Deedes writes: "What it comes to is this, that the Turks today (*i.e.* the opposition Turks) can offer decent

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terms with territorial integrity (to the Arabs). We can offer independence, but we cannot guarantee territorial integrity, owing to the interests of France in Syria."

This sentence, and other entries that follow, throw an important light on the whole question of Arab claims, including the controversy over Jewish rights in Palestine. It shows that as early as April 1916, and before the question of the Jewish National Home had been publicly bruited, the British were aware that a single kingdom composed of all predominantly Arab peoples was impracticable, partly because of undertakings to an ally, partly because the Arab territories themselves lacked homogeneity.

On April 17th there is another important entry: "Telegrams received from M. S.<sup>1</sup> set forth the agreement that had been come to by him with the French and Russians as regards Turkey, Syria and the South. The Russians to have Erzincan and the French to go as far north as Sivas and thence down, presumably north and west of Aleppo, to the sea, including Damascus, apparently. Thereabouts the 'A-ol' state is to be given an outlet to the sea. Then comes the Beyrut and Jerusalem enclave, and then the Arab state goes on. . . .

The notes continue: "... Another thing which has happened, and which is very relevant to this question, is that the Syrian Arabs including Reşit Riza have come to an agreement with the Saadik Turkish party, by which the latter promised to the non-Turkish elements in the Ottoman Empire autonomy. This the Arabs have agreed to and Dr. Shabander has been deputed to draw up a scheme with Sureya on these lines."

At this moment, therefore, April 1916, one of the disaffected Turkish parties was negotiating with one party of the Arabs on the question of Arab autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. At the same time another Turkish

<sup>1</sup> Sir Mark Sykes, M.P.

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party — that of Prince Sabahattin — was discussing peace terms with the British and showing a willingness, indeed eagerness, to come to an understanding; the principle of Turkish possession of Constantinople being the one fixed demand on which no Turk, of any political complexion whatsoever, would give way.

But this question of Constantinople was the great stumbling-block in all these difficult negotiations, since it had been agreed by the Allies that in the event of victory it was to go to Russia. And under the date April 24th–April 28th the issue became perfectly plain to those in Cairo who were attempting to keep in play all the diverse, suspicious and antagonistic parties in question.

“We have been sending several telegrams home about Turkish and Arab questions,” writes Deedes, “also our memo. on the subject, when yesterday a reply came from the War Office, setting out in the full glare of day the Franco-Russian agreement with ourselves for the partition of Turkey, in which Russia is given the extreme Armenian province and presumably Constantinople, while France gets the line from a little North of Haifa which goes up to Cape Adamour (excluding Aleppo, Damascus, Homs, Hama) thence the line runs South of the Taurus to Harput, including Sivas and Diyarbakir, and has for its Southern boundary the line we had originally drawn with the Shereef. This leaves the Arab area unaltered except, the agreement said, this latter area is divided into economic spheres, one British and one French.”

This proposal contains the gist of what was afterwards known as the Sykes-Picot agreement, by which the French and British economic zones of influence were delimited by the respective Governments, apparently without full consultation with the High Commissioner in Egypt, and cutting across the tentative and complex proposals which he, through the personnel of the “Arab Bureau”, had already

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made. These zones, as fully defined in October 1916, were as follows :

### Zone A. French sphere of influence.

A triangle running from Aleppo to Tiberias, to Rowanduz, near the Persian frontier, including Aleppo, Homs and Damascus. The French bound themselves to uphold an independent Arab state.

### Zone B. British sphere of influence.

The western boundary to follow the Jordan, turning west to the coast at Gaza, along the Sinai frontier to Akâba and east to Mesopotamia.

The adumbration of this project, in April 1916, jammed a great part of the machinery of the Arab Bureau, and Deedes writes of it, " These arrangements of course definitely lose our adherence from the Arab, Syrian and other Turkish opposition parties.

" As to the latter, the telegram says that they have been to Europe and were evidently told by H.M. Government that if they wish to discuss peace terms they had better apply themselves to Russia, on whom at the beginning of the war they made a treacherous attack ! So much, therefore, for all my attempts to collect and blend the various movements here in Cairo. At the same time, never having been given a lead as to what the Home Government wished it has been difficult to know how to act. . . ."

Then, with a little burst of temper which is refreshing in a man so equable as Deedes, he says that it doesn't matter, for he, personally, doesn't care a damn what happens to the Turks and Turkey, and still less what happens to the Arabs. Of course, neither of these statements is true. He has never been able to detach his heart from Turkey ; he has continued his ardent study of their language in the midst of many and great preoccupations, and has followed with sympathy and insight the notable experiment made by

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Atatürk. Having visited the new Turkey, when it was staggering under the shock of the devastating earthquake of 1939, and seen the manner in which it was dealt with by a race of officials trained under the new régime, he is of the opinion that of all the great men who have appeared on the stage of our century, Mustafa Kemal was perhaps the greatest. As for the Arabs, though he never learned to know them as intimately as he knew the Turks, the harmonious nature of his relations with them in Palestine, when he was Civil Secretary, is proof enough of his interest in their aspirations and his personal liking. This gust of irritation was directed against H.M. Government, who, by failing to keep their representative in Cairo, Sir H. McMahon, closely informed of their policy, had brought to nothing the patient labour of months.

From this point the tangled story of the negotiations which preceded the Arab rising disappears from his pages, though there is a note — undated, but from the context obviously made about the beginning of June — which rounds off the tale as far as he is concerned :

“Owing . . . to the fact that the Home Government refuses to have anything to do with the Turks we have been obliged to leave all that alone. With the exception of the Shereef negotiations, which have finally culminated in the latter's taking action in Hejaz,<sup>1</sup> which is a great triumph for Clayton.”

He was by no means without occupation, however, and with that capacity he has for immediately turning his back on a disappointment to direct his energies in another channel, the very next entry, after he has written that “he doesn't care a damn”, opens blithely enough on the following day with a note, “. . . Beginning to be very successful in my anti-C.U.P. campaign. . . .”

The position in Egypt was a delicate one, since Egypt

<sup>1</sup> The Arab Revolt broke out on June 5th, 1916.

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was a British Protectorate and a state of war therefore officially existed between it and the enemies of Great Britain, but the Egyptian people themselves were, not unnaturally, more concerned with their own difficulties and grievances than with the British cause. In view of the threat to the Suez Canal from the Turkish armies on the east, and of the presence on the west of the hostile Senussi, certain military actions had to be taken which impinged on Egyptian sovereignty and interfered with the lives of ordinary people. Inevitably there was friction, for all the tactful care of the High Commissioner and those under him, and it was easy for agitators to work on this discontent and create serious anti-British feeling. Moreover, a very large number of Germans, Austrians and Hungarians was still resident in Egypt, and Turkish agents came and went with alarming ease, since it was not easy to determine whether they were dissident Turks, in opposition to Enver, or agents of the Turkish Government. Throughout the whole of 1916 a large part of Deedes' work was concerned with discovering and counteracting the various activities of the C.U.P., one of which, the secret traffic in arms and ammunition, had reached serious dimensions. Since the object of this traffic must clearly be an armed rising against the British, it was not a matter to be treated lightly. Yet Deedes' notes give me the impression that he thoroughly enjoyed this part of his job, partly because perhaps it was complex, obscure and dangerous — and he likes that sort of game! — partly because it was a question where personality was a prime factor and he, with his knowledge of the Near East, his perfect command of Turkish, and his acquaintance with many of the actors in all factions, was peculiarly well suited to deal with it.

The problem was not made easier by the fact that he believed the Egyptian Secret Police to be sympathetic to the agitators and working against the British, and he considered

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that in order to deal with the situation nothing less would suffice than a permanent Bureau of Intelligence which should cover the whole area of the Turkish Empire, the Southern Balkans, Persia, Egypt, North Africa and, for certain purposes, India. Only so, he considered, would there be the correlation of all relevant facts which would enable those whose duty it was to ensure public security to determine what men and movements were really dangerous, or what persons were merely disgruntled agitators with little serious influence. He wrote a long memorandum on this subject and sent it to Colonel FitzGerald, Lord Kitchener's Private Secretary, but nowhere among his extant papers can I find a note as to its reception, nor whether he was permitted to take any steps to implement the plan. It appears from very many of the incidents which he notes, however, that he did not exaggerate the danger of an anti-British rising fomented by the C.U.P. Among these incidents is that of the raid by six Turkish-speaking British officers on secret arms stores, to which reference has already been made. But the tantalizing fact about these Cairo notes is that very often one has the beginning of a good story and no clue to the end, either because by the time Deedes made his next entry the matter had passed out of his mind or because many of the loose sheets on which he wrote have gone astray. Such is the case with the full story of Mustafa's journey to Damascus, which would surely have provided a really colourful "thriller" of the Secret Service; such also is the episode of the raid, of which he tells us in four lines that his officers, having been "dressed up" (his phrase!) in plain clothes and tarbushes, proceeded one night on their errand. Apparently they brought off their coup successfully, but of how they did it, whether they met with opposition or rounded up any nefarious persons in the process, we are left in ignorance. On another occasion he writes, "Hope to expose many irre-



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gularities reported to me as going on in a certain Red Crescent hospital here, kept for Turkish sick and wounded, and in which all sorts of hanky-panky is said to go on. No one dared to touch it yet", and again one is left with an incomplete scenario, though one would give much to know the precise nature of the "hanky-panky" and what happened when Deedes thrust his long, slender nose into it. Even if questioned, I doubt if he would remember, for, apart from an overpowering reluctance to go back on the past, Deedes has done so many strange things and mixed with so many queer people that a murder outside his bedroom door in the Anatolian highlands, or an evening spent with a Turkish secret society in Cairo no more strikes him as dramatic than presiding at a conference of social workers, or taking the train from London to Nottingham.

He had only been two months in Cairo when he was indeed invited to become a member of a Turkish secret society. This was composed of a group of the Ittilaf party, which was strongly opposed to the C.U.P., and had made tentative efforts with a predecessor of Deedes to form an organization to counter its dangerous activities, but the scheme proved abortive because this Intelligence Officer did not speak Turkish and was unfamiliar with the East, its cross-currents of intrigue and the complicated racial, religious and political passions which formed the background. Deedes, when invited to join, naturally had to seek the permission of the High Commissioner, who was dubious about the expediency of having a British officer who was working directly under him becoming an active member of such a society. He remained benevolently neutral, however, when Deedes got round the corner by suggesting to the Ittilaf party that they should form a Central Committee of seven to direct activities and that, though he could not be a member of the Committee, he

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would be its "guiding spirit". As an earnest of such guidance he drew up a draft proposal for their official programme and doubtless the agenda of the first meeting also. But in his hands the secret society became a club "where Turks and Arabs of all parties and opinions shall meet and discuss, and exchange ideas common to them and us, and I hope that out of this we may, when the time comes, form a party". Both Turks and Arabs were disappointed when they saw things take this shape because, like most of us, they would have much preferred all the paraphernalia of a secret society. But it is no use being dramatic with Deedes, and they consoled themselves a little by asking for a salary of £15 a month, per head, with commensurate fees for extra work.

The club, however, did develop into a very useful body ; it brought Deedes into touch with a large number of men who would never have cared to call at his office or be seen talking to him in public, and it collected a vast amount of information from the talk of the bazaars, native cafés and brothels and all of those underground and hidden sources debarred to an Englishman.

On one occasion, March 28th, Deedes writes, "In the evening, I had a meeting of the Club and so heard every imaginable sort of thing about the doings of the C.U.P. and the police in Cairo, and about nationalism and anti-British feeling".

That was not pleasant hearing for a British officer. The fall of Kut was now imminent ; the Turks had not only crossed the desert of Sinai (a remarkable feat in itself) but had repulsed the British in an engagement at Qatiya, in which the handling of the British troops had (according to Dawney) been weak and hesitant, and the transport services had broken down hopelessly.

But even less pleasant hearing was a conversation held between April 28th and April 30th, to which Deedes

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contrived that Robert Graves and another man<sup>1</sup> should listen. How he concealed them on this occasion he does not say, but since there were two of them, probably not in a box, as in the case of F. S.

The conversation was between "P., whom I had bought, and I. E. of the Cairo C.P., who had long been known to us as a violent pro-German. As a result of this very important conversation it appeared perfectly true, all that our prisoners had told us all along, namely that the C.U.P. were working hand-in-glove with the police and felt absolutely certain of their boast of security. In the course of conversation [I. E.] stated that they had complete control over the interior and that they could do anything they liked at any time with the English in Egypt. — I have long maintained that we are sitting on a volcano here and I now firmly believe it."

Information which filtered in to Deedes early in May from the tortuous and subterranean channels of which he had such intimate knowledge corroborated his suspicions. It revealed that a large and powerful organization of Germans, which had existed in Egypt before the war, was working with Turkish members of the C.U.P. and other agitators to bring about a seditious rising in Egypt which should coincide with a Turkish attack on the British forces in the Sinai desert.<sup>2</sup> The reports were further supported by documents which had come into British hands from other sources, and they revealed so dangerous a state of affairs in the provinces, notably in the Fayoum, that Deedes and Clayton felt that the matter must at once be brought to the knowledge of the Commander-in-Chief, particularly since there was at that moment a suggestion that the Army in Egypt might well be reduced — indeed, the decision to

<sup>1</sup> The name is illegible in the original.

<sup>2</sup> The Turks showed great activity near Romani in July and attacked in force on August 4th but were repulsed. They managed, however, to withdraw the major portion of their army.

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reduce it to four Divisions seems to have been already taken. When the Commander-in-Chief had read these first-hand accounts of subversive activities, he decided that certain persons named therein should be arrested and deported forthwith.

But here Deedes and Clayton hung back. They wished to have a little further time to check and counter-check, because, says Deedes, "we were faced with the usual difficulty of having no one we could trust. . . . We felt that, although we knew enough as to the accuracy of our statements as to the organization as a whole, yet that it was quite possible that mistakes had been made by No. 1 (who had been in prison seven months) in the matter of some names. . . ."

But the Commander-in-Chief, thoroughly alarmed, had already summoned his Generals and invited two Admirals to a conference and arranged with the latter for transport for the suspects. He was therefore very angry when Clayton went to him, suggesting a postponement of the arrests, and so, on the appointed day, eighteen men were arrested "with great talk and much ado!" All passed off quietly, save that one of the men whose name was on the list was found to have been dead ten years. Clayton and Deedes were now in trouble, for the Commander-in-Chief, perturbed by the knowledge that one of the suspects had been gathered to his fathers ten years earlier, "began to shout for proofs", in the words of the irreverent diarist. This was not easily forthcoming, because No. 1, the chief informant in whom both Clayton and Deedes had confidence, categorically refused to produce documentary evidence, and the Commander-in-Chief thereupon informed Clayton that, as a result, his confidence in the work of the Arab Bureau was badly shaken. All ended happily, however, as very soon evidence began to come in that the arrest and deportation of these men had had a most salutary effect, and

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the Commander-in-Chief sent an amicable telephone message to say that he considered the matter settled and, further, that as far as he was concerned, he was prepared to send out of the country anyone whom they showed to be undesirable. And twice, during the course of the summer, Deedes notes that the situation with regard to public security had become definitely easier, while one of his last entries is to the effect that he was glad to have made contact with a certain Saïd because "both he and we are working for the prosperity of the people of Egypt."

Then, in November 1916, even these jottings come to an end, though he was to remain in Cairo for nearly a year more, while the British Army captured El Arish and advanced into Palestine, while Sir Archibald Murray, after the failure of the two battles for Gaza, was replaced by Sir Edward Allenby as Commander-in-Chief, and a breath of new vigour blew through all ranks of an army apparently locked in stalemate, prelude to that first and perhaps greatest of military successes in the last war, and against no mean foe.

Of all this, nothing : a laconic statement of ten hours' work a day for months on end ; a hint or two of the tangled background of intrigue — an interview with an Egyptian lady who had much to say of the difference between the official attitude of certain important police officers and their conversation in their own houses ; the arrival of another lady, "the famous Madame B——", because of Foreign Office nervousness over certain inflammatory problems of international finance. There was the question of recruiting Arabs for the Army of the Hejaz from among those who had been taken prisoner during their forced service in the Turkish Army, many of whom showed no great disposition to be recruited in the cause of Arab independence, having doubtless had enough of campaigning. Lloyd's name comes and goes through these pages like the unquiet spirit he was ;

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there is the record of a dinner with Gertrude Bell at which Deedes met Ronald Storrs and went afterwards to his house to see his books, those books which were destroyed with all Storrs' other lovely possessions in Cyprus, and his gifted host played to him, to his great pleasure. There is an anecdote which he recounted to me once, without any appreciation of its picturesque quality, of how, during the revolt in the Hejaz, he used to spend his Saturday afternoons packing golden sovereigns into cartridge-cases and seeing them loaded on to camels for dispatch to Lawrence because, as he explained, you could not trust many people with English gold! But here are the last of those direct and daily narratives which for five years, from 1911 to 1916, have given a picture of events and persons in the Near East which, if they lack the suavity of more conscious writers, provide so rich a quarry for the historian by their unself-consciousness, their truthfulness and the abundance of their detail. A handful of letters there are, some indeed of surpassing interest, but for the remaining years of his sojourn in the Near East the story must be filled in from the records of others, not from his own.

## Chapter Eighteen

IN July 1917 Deedes first met General Allenby, the new Commander-in-Chief Middle East, who had replaced Sir Archibald Murray after the failure of the two British attacks on Gaza in the spring of the year. It was in Alexandria, whither Deedes had gone to see the High Commissioner, who had taken up his summer residence there, as had also "the whole of the Civil and Sudan Government and its wife now on leave . . . and any of the troops that can get leave from the front". As in December 1915, he found the place "one mass of people and whirl of gaiety", and having been presented to his new chief, whose looks, he remarked, did not belie the favourable reports of him, he went back to the heat of Cairo. There he continued to work until November, taking no leave, and only occasionally allowing himself the respite of a visit to a country house on the Nile where, after dinner, he and his hosts would sit on through hours of the balmy Egyptian night, by the light of the moon.

By September the strong hand of Allenby had already made itself felt, and when Deedes went up for a few days to the British lines before Gaza and Beersheba, in company with Clayton and a French Minister, on what he characterizes as a joy-ride, he found our positions "*le dernier mot* in organization, a really wonderful sight". For one part of the organization, the network of permits and passes which were necessary in order to pass through the war zone, he himself was responsible and might justifiably feel a little pride.

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At Allenby's G.H.Q. he again saw his friend Dawnay, who was Deputy Chief of General Staff, and he notes in his letter home the pleasure that the meeting had given him. It is curious that after Dawnay left the East he and Deedes hardly ever met again, for their liking was reciprocal and they had many ideas in common in those days. Both were bent on reform in the social and political structure of England, and from the many, if brief, references to their talks scattered about in Deedes' notes, they appear to have shared a profound dissatisfaction with an order of things which could lead to such a European chaos. On one occasion at least, in face of the terrible slaughter on Gallipoli, they agreed that "this must never happen again!" When Deedes accepted the appointment to the Arab Bureau in January 1916, Dawnay had told Gertrude Bell that he hoped it did not mean that Deedes was going to remain out East and would not be available for political work in England after the war. For these young men contemplated nothing less than the formation of a Fourth Party, to be free of the vested interests of the existing Parliamentary parties, and, by enlisting the support of all men of good will, to introduce reforms which would modify the whole structure of our social and economic life, cutting out the dead wood and making room for new and vigorous growth. These ideas, which were fermenting in their minds in the years before the Russian Revolution threw down its challenge to all existing institutions, were to find expression through strictly constitutional channels, and the Fourth Party, to consist of themselves, George Lloyd, and an as yet undiscovered fourth, was discussed with Aubrey Herbert and received his blessing. It was not to be; Aubrey Herbert died young, and of the three friends only Lord Lloyd entered Parliament, almost at the end of his brilliant career. But one cannot help the speculation as to how far three men, of diverse gifts but equal force of character, might



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have influenced the course of events in the years between 1919 and 1939 if they had closed their ranks and carried out their intention. Deedes' friendship with Lloyd continued right up to the latter's death, but the severance from Dawnay is the more to be regretted since, even if the Fourth Party had never materialized, their association would have been fruitful. They had much to give each other because they are, in many ways, complementary in their qualities. Dawnay's brilliant and analytical intellect which, in the post-war years, he gave to the service of industry and finance, would have helped Deedes to a sharper understanding of the formidable economic problems confronting any major social reforms ; Deedes' reference of all questions to the ultimate test of human rights and human needs might have led Dawnay to introduce into the dry and rarefied atmosphere of high finance some breath of our simple, common humanity. It is possible to imagine a Deedes, fortified and instructed by Dawnay ; a Dawnay, fortified and inspired by Deedes, practising a fine vigorous iconoclasm upon many evil old images still enshrined throughout the twenty years between then and now.

After this short "joy-ride" Deedes returned to Cairo, leaving his friend, in his capacity as D.C.G.S., immersed in the preparations for the third, and successful, battle of Gaza. It was on October 31st that Allenby made his bold attack at Beersheba, and on November 7th that at last Gaza was captured. Deedes had no direct part in the remarkable work by which the British Intelligence misled General Kress von Kressenstein, German commander of the Eighth Turkish Army, into believing that the main attack would be directed against Gaza, as formerly, whereas it was launched against Beersheba, and therefore the story, one of the most stirring and picturesque of the whole war, does not fall within the scope of this book. But it is difficult to pass by in silence the exploit of Colonel Meinertzhagen. He rode with

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a handful of men to within close range of a Turkish patrol, then turned and fled, reeling in his saddle as if wounded and dropping a haversack in his flight. This haversack was found by the Turks stained with fresh blood — drawn from Meinertzhagen's horse by a deliberate sharp scratch — and it contained, along with £20 in English notes and some private letters, the minutes of a Staff meeting at which it was decided to make the main attack on Gaza, using Beersheba as a feint to draw off a large body of the enemy. The Staff officer who was supposed to have sent these secret minutes to Meinertzhagen strongly criticized the decision. Kress von Kressenstein hesitated, deliberated as to whether this document was a trick, and finally decided that it contained the truth. He was helped thereto by the discovery, a few days later, of a "planted" packet of sandwiches wrapped in an odd sheet of the Gazette published at G.H.Q., in which the troops were notified of the lost haversack and ordered to return it at once, if found, to headquarters.

This, though the most colourful, was but one of the many subterfuges by which the enemy was tricked, but British Intelligence had need of imagination and ingenuity in this campaign, since the country over which we were fighting harboured an assortment of peoples, Turks, Arabs, Jews and Christians. While the main part of the population other than Turkish was pro-British, it was not easy, in the case of individuals, to determine which would succumb to the lure of gold, while the wandering habits of the Bedouin made it easy for them to carry on extensive spying.

It is not until November 25th that Deedes once more enters the scene, having been summoned from Cairo by Allenby.

After the highly successful action at Gaza, the Turks counter-attacked on November 11th and 12th and, though Allenby was not caught unprepared, it appears that his Intelligence had temporarily lost touch on the greater part

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of the front and he was unaware that there were three Turkish Divisions within striking distance of his right wing. The official history, in recording this fact, says: "No Intelligence Service, however good — and that of the Expeditionary Force was highly efficient — can hope to keep in close touch with the dispositions of a disorganized and hastily retreating enemy".<sup>1</sup> Whether this was the reason that Deedes was ordered up to H.Q. or whether, as seems more probable, he was required for political and administrative problems consequent on the rapid advance of Allenby's troops across enemy territory, from this date until the end of the campaign he was in Palestine.

A letter to his mother, dated November 28th, takes up the story from his own angle, after a long silence:

"... I arrived three days ago," he writes, "tore myself literally from Cairo! Eleven hours a day hardly saw me through. Now I have made dispositions for it to carry on locally under a deputy, all points of importance and principle being referred here. I am, of my own section, up here alone and am getting them up from Cairo one by one as I replace them there. You see, the move entails no decrease, but the addition or building up of a fresh branch to take on all the new political and semi-administrative questions here.

"... The administrative problem (with its political and other complications) is a big and difficult one but I am not barren of ideas. . . . I shall be paying occasional visits to Cairo of course, relaxing them as the man in charge becomes more *au courant* with the work. I am sorry in some ways to be dissociated from the Residency and other pleasant people I worked with, but with the former I still maintain a close liaison on all the political matters that pass through my hands. . . . My old staff, of some fourteen officers or more, also I was sorry to leave, we had had one or two years' strenuous work between us. But I feel no compunction

<sup>1</sup> *Military Operations — Palestine*, vol. ii, p. 156.





Allenby entering Jerusalem, December 1917

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in leaving, as I think I gave Egypt two good years of work. . . .”

On November 15th the First Australian Light Horse had entered Lydda, traditionally the scene of the martyrdom of St. George, and on December 5th, 6th and 7th the British closed in on Jerusalem. As is well known, Allenby had issued strict orders that on no account was Jerusalem to be subjected to a bombardment which might cause damage to the sacred places, thus setting, it seemed, a pretty problem to his commanders. But on the night of December 7th the Turks withdrew, leaving Jerusalem an undefended city.

On the morning of December 8th the Mayor and the chief civil dignitaries came out to surrender it. But they did not find it easy ! The first two men they met in British uniform were Privates Church and Andrews, the one a regimental cook, wandering about in a search for water. When made to understand that this imposing body of gentlemen wished to surrender Jerusalem they did not feel equal to the task of receiving it, and asked the Mayor to wait a little while they found a sergeant. They found two, on outpost duty, but the sergeants likewise felt themselves out of their depth in such a situation, and suggested that they should look for an officer. The third encounter was with two majors of artillery, on reconnaissance, and they decided that, if the Mayor would be so kind as still to wait a little, they would return to their battery and telephone. The telephone message ultimately produced a Brigade Commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Bayley, who, with Brigadier-General Watson, formally accepted the surrender of a city for which, through three Crusades, the flower of European chivalry had laid down its life in vain.

On December 11th Allenby made his entry into Jerusalem by the Jaffa Gate, on foot, and with the barest minimum of military pageantry. Outside the gate there was a guard of thirty, drawn from all ranks ; on the right of the gate

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fifteen from British regiments ; on the left fifteen from the Anzac forces. Within the gate on the right there was a guard of twenty men, drawn from the French forces, and on the left twenty from the Italian forces. In nothing, perhaps, is the magnanimity of Allenby more clearly shown than in these dispositions, for he gave to our Allies the place of honour within the gate, and assigned to them a slightly larger number of men to participate in this unique ceremony. It is one of those gestures which accord with the ideals of chivalry, and of which modern war furnishes so very few examples.

Deedes had the great good fortune to be one of the small group who entered the Jaffa Gate with Allenby. It was a distinguished company and included Sir Archibald (then Lieutenant-Colonel) Wavell, Liaison Officer between Allenby and the War Office ; Colonel T. E. Lawrence ; General Clayton, Chief Political Officer ; Major-General Bols, Chief of General Staff ; Brigadier-General Guy Dawnay ; Sir Philip Chetwode and his Chief of Staff, General W. H. Bartholomew, as well as the Commanders of the French and Italian forces and the French High Commissioner, M. Picot. Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. Deedes was included in his capacity as G.S.O. Intelligence and he was delighted when Allenby invited him because, with his habitual modesty, he had not for a moment expected to be among the " chosen ". For all his protracted and arduous labours, he did not think himself of sufficient importance to be singled out for this honour.

His letter, of that same date, gives a pleasant and informal glimpse of Allenby and of a historic event which exercised the pen of many journalists. Given in Deedes' own way, with his invariable under-statement, however, his account adds something of interest to the more picturesque descriptions of the word-craftsmen.

" Yesterday ", he writes, " at 10 A.M. I received five

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minutes' warning to get ready at G.H.Q., proceed to the Gendarmerie, pick up some Frenchmen and proceed towards the Front. We had had heavy rain and the roads were in an awful state and cars broken down everywhere ; I never for a moment expected to arrive anywhere as we were four in the car and luggage as well. We stuck four times and had to be pulled out and then towed out and finally we arrived here at advanced G.H.Q. towards sundown.

"I saw the Chief, who asked us to dinner. Shortly afterwards Clayton turned up. We all managed to get somewhere to sleep here and it was bitterly cold. I am the lucky possessor . . . of a 'pushtin' coat — bear inside and skin outside — you probably know them. So I rolled myself in that and kept tolerably warm. This morning we left at 7 A.M. in eleven cars ! A whole procession, and had a difficult piece of country to negotiate, but got through up to within 200 yards of the Jaffa Gate at 11 A.M. It was a perfectly glorious day, cold, bright sun and not a cloud. It's a wonderful drive up through the hills, winding through the olive-covered slopes of the rather bare limestone hills. . . . One does not get any view (by the road we came) of the city from a distance but one comes straight on it.

"At 12 o'clock the C.-in-C. entered the Jaffa Gate, accompanied and followed by the various people according to arrangement. Once inside we went to the Citadel . . . and there the proclamation was read in various tongues, with a crowd of local dignitaries, Syriac, Arab, Abyssinian, Coptic, Roman Catholic, Greek, Armenian, Austrian and other church dignitaries, all beautifully got up with all their jewels. The Chief was then introduced to them all (cinematographs going hard all the time !) and then we marched out again and the ceremony was over. The moment when we walked in under the Jaffa Gate, the C.-in-C. as Chief of a victorious army, after 600 years, was not one to be forgotten."



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Deedes has two little snapshots of this event, taken I know not by whom, but certainly by an amateur. One is of the moment just after Allenby has passed through the gate and is advancing alone, a tall strong figure, dwarfing all those behind him, and the other is of Allenby standing before the serried ranks of his Staff, the "local dignitaries" and all those who had been invited to hear his proclamation read. Once more he dominates the scene, solid and clear-cut, a very tower of a man, making all others in the picture seem vague and indistinguishable, as if a little out of focus.

But that great hour over, Allenby and those about him turned to work. The Turks had been driven from Jerusalem but they were not yet conquered; the whole of Syria and Transjordan were still in their hands and nine months were to elapse before the British troops, after their victory at Nablus, advanced through the Pass of Musmus, that pass through which Thothmes III had advanced when he defeated the King of Kadesh at Megiddo.

Apart from military preoccupations, there was an administrative problem of no mean order in the occupied territory. With the retreat of the Turkish armies from Jerusalem and the surrounding district (the area known, under Turkish rule, as the Sanjak of Jerusalem) the whole machinery of civil life broke down. The occupying British forces found no postal service in operation, no police, no organized transport, no machinery for the collection of taxes, national or local. Banks had ceased to function because of the uncertainty of all fiscal arrangements, including the value of Turkish currency; peasants had ceased to bring their goods to market, there was no buying and selling; schools were closed. Deedes sums up the situation in a phrase or two, in writing to his mother.

"I daresay it has never presented itself to you", he writes, "what happens or would happen if, say, the whole of the British local government of Surrey, Kent and Sussex

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rose [*sic*] — and Japanese came in. How are the latter to get the reins of government into their hands? Currency, taxation of all sorts, trade, commerce, municipal affairs, relief, justice, police, gendarmerie, finance and as many other questions as you like to add. Hence my excuse for not writing!

His knowledge of Turkish civil administration, coupled with his knowledge of the language, was invaluable at this time. Though General Clayton was appointed Chief Administrative Officer, he and Deedes had worked together for two years and neither was a lover of red tape, so Deedes, while still directing the Intelligence Service, soon found himself involved in a hundred and one other problems. It was essential at once to enlist the help of the relief organizations, both Christian and Jewish, on behalf of large numbers of refugees or of homeless people, and this he was well equipped to do. He had also to hear the grievances and settle disputes of the various Arab tribes, to receive deputations from every imaginable group that thronged that land of all sects, Moslems, Druses, Maronites, Armenians, Copts and Assyrians, and to steer a delicate course among the Bishops, Archbishops, Archimandrites, Rabbis and Imams. In the midst of it all he found time to encourage by his precept and his presence any promising local industries, such as the lace industry, formerly carried on at the Syrian Orphanage under German management; to visit and inspect some fifty officers who were scattered about all over the occupied territory, working under his direction; to form an Economic Section — his new toy, he calls it — and realizing that his own knowledge and experience were limited in this respect, to have the wisdom to select “good business men” from among those on his staff.

In spite of all these activities, this travelling up and down the country, these inspections, meetings, parleyings with

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Certain People of Importance, he contrived to write to his mother more frequently and in greater detail than at any time since his sojourn in Turkey. His letters recapture, too, something of the zest of those days, though naturally they cannot have the light-heartedness of a young man of twenty-seven, particularly after the searing experience of Gallipoli. But once again one can feel that flood of energy which at times pulses through him, expressed in the swift, matter-of-fact style, where ideas and the records of events jostle each other for place, tumbling over the commas and semi-colons in the old familiar way, and humour peeps out again from odd corners. On one occasion he tells her that, though "relief" has very little to do with "intelligence", he, having some little knowledge of the subject, naturally finds an excuse for putting his finger in the pie, but that his reputation for trying to run other people's shows as well as his own was now sufficiently established to disarm all criticism, and he concludes, "this propensity I have clearly inherited from *you*, you will allow?" There is a nice description of himself in his pushtin coat which "has a great moral effect and makes me look like a Tibetan Grandee! Being bright yellow with a black astrakan collar" — and, indeed, the long pale face of Deedes rising above this splendour must have been a strange spectacle. There is a little snapshot of him, too, taken at this period, which shows him turned more than half-way from the spectator, very slim and astonishingly youthful in his khaki tunic and cap, gazing down into a little hollow, surrounded by thickets, in which is a flock of sheep. But the endorsement in his hand-writing is: "Self, looking sheepish".

The release from the long and arduous hours of office work at Cairo; the open-air life of what he calls "the veldt", cold and stormy as it sometimes was; the new scenes, new duties, the atmosphere of success instead of the dun cloud of failure which had hung so long over the

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British armies in the Middle East ; the sense of opportunities for clean new work in a reformed administration, instead of perpetual frustration : — all these acted as a tonic, physically and morally. In every one of his letters he says that he is very well, that the change of scene is as good as leave to him and the new life is too interesting, too full and too urgent for him to wish to go.

Four days after Allenby's entry into Jerusalem, Deedes was sent back there from G.H.Q. to deal with the problems of administration, since the Military Governor, Brigadier-General Borton, had neither the time nor the experience for such work. By the evening of that same day Deedes had interviewed the leading members of the municipality, drawn up a memorandum on the situation with proposals for the immediate steps to be taken and dispatched it to Allenby's Headquarters. It is the familiar problem, he says to his mother, trying to make bricks without straw : “. . . the Municipality accepting all one's proposals with acclamation, but doing absolutely nothing to carry them out”.

He remained in Jerusalem only a short time, for Colonel Storrs was very shortly appointed Governor of Jerusalem, a position he filled with great distinction, doing very valuable work for the preservation of all that was of historic interest and for the cleansing and improvement of what was squalid, while encouraging enlightened town-planning to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population. But it is probably Deedes' short period of labour in the dim recesses of municipal incompetence which has led many to believe that he was at some time Governor of Jerusalem.

By Christmas Day he was back at G.H.Q. and on Christmas Eve he and Guy Dawnay “did” the city, in traditional fashion, with a guide. At the Convent of Ecce Homo they were shown round by some “dear little French Sisters” — Deedes always had a weakness for nuns ! —

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who displayed to them "the Roman road, up which our Lord was taken from the Judgment Hall to Calvary, and they show you stones on which are marks of games — noughts and crosses — supposed to have been played by the Roman soldiers who were lining the streets and waiting for the procession to come. The marks are there, but whether . . . ! Anyway, the little French sisters believed it all and so did we."

Dinner on Christmas Eve was the happiest gathering he records throughout the war, for, besides Dawnay, his friend Lloyd was there, as well as Clayton and Storrs and Eddy Cadogan. On Christmas Day they all went to the Mission Church, wild and stormy though the weather was, and in the middle of the service Canon Hichens<sup>1</sup> turned up, booted and spurred, donned a borrowed surplice and joined in the service. The day ended with Deedes and Dawnay, shivering with cold, huddled in their "sitting-room" — a tent, with the rain beating on the canvas — Dawnay reading the Bible with a book of reference and Deedes, buried in his bear-skin coat, the *Nineteenth Century*.

During the ensuing months Deedes came very closely into contact with the Jews in Palestine, at first through their admirable relief organizations, which provided valuable machinery for handling this urgent problem and were by far the largest and the best equipped of all the charitable institutions. But he was already cognizant of the aspirations of Zionism, since as Political Officer in Egypt the question of the future of the Jews in Palestine had fallen within his province. The first time I find him using the word "Zionist" is in a letter dated January 3rd, 1917, in which he mentions that young Samuel, son of Mr Herbert Samuel,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Canon Hichens had been Chaplain to the Forces on Gallipoli and had once spoken to Deedes (as recorded in the diary) of the bitterness felt by the men at the rare appearance among them of General and Senior Staff Officers.

<sup>2</sup> Now Viscount Samuel of Mount Carmel, G.C.B., G.B.E.

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is on his Staff: “. . . he is a very nice boy and as he is of course very much interested in the Zionist movement, and my work is largely concerned with Jewish problems, he does very well indeed”. But in an incomplete letter which, from the context, was written in the spring of 1918, he says explicitly that in Egypt he had all the early handling of the Zionist question, from the beginning of 1917, with the Foreign Office, through the Residency. “When we got into Palestine”, he continues, “I organized the first relief for Jewish colonies and have ever since, I may say, been looked to by local Jewish members for assistance and support.” He then records his first meeting with Dr. Weizmann, with whom began an association and friendship which has lasted to the present day.

“Dr. W.,<sup>1</sup> I need not explain to you,” he writes, “is at the head of the Zionist movement in England, he and his colleague, Dr. Sokoloff. I was therefore not a little gratified when he came and saw me in my tent with Rothschild and said that he would never be able to thank me sufficiently for what I had done for them.

“He stayed an hour and told me all about it, his conversations with A. B. [Arthur Balfour], L. G. and so on, and then discussed the future work of the Commission here. I am lending him young Samuel (son of Herbert Samuel) on my Staff, during his stay here and am then forming a special section (which indeed I had in embryo) to deal with Jewish affairs only, which has always been considered *my* special care in this force.

“In the evening, the Chief asked me to dine to meet Dr. W. and we had a further long conversation then. I hope to see much of him . . . He is one of those very taking personalities that one occasionally meets, very quiet, very moderate, very statesmanlike, very tactful. I shall have an interesting Jewish chapter to give you one day.”

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Chaim Weizmann.

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It is here that a story told me by Mr. Israel Sieff<sup>1</sup> about Deedes, Allenby and Weizmann may be recorded, as it appears likely from the context that the incident is referred to in this undated letter.

Mr. Sieff, with Dr. Weizmann, first met Deedes at Dar-es-Salaam in April 1918. He says that he found Deedes most sympathetic to their point of view, although, at the time, Sieff thinks, he had not fully grasped the political implications of Zionism, nor the rôle which the Jewish problem was destined to play in Palestine, Syria and Europe. Sieff was impressed, as many others have been, by the immense courage of Deedes. Where a moral principle is involved, where there is a wrong to be righted, an injustice to be lifted, he is fearless, whatever the weight of authority ranged against him, and he is tireless. Both these qualities were displayed in the affair of Petah Tikvah.

Petah Tikvah was a small but flourishing Jewish agricultural colony near Telaviv, one of the older colonies founded on the endowments of Baron de Rothschild. In the spring of 1918 it lay within the British front lines, and was suspect to Intelligence, since it was reported to be the rendezvous of Arab spies. General Bols therefore decided to clear out the whole civilian population, Arabs and Jews alike, and to occupy it with his troops. Weizmann and Sieff protested that this would be the end of a vigorous and self-supporting community, that the land on which so much labour had been expended would go out of cultivation and the settlers would be turned into penniless vagrants. It would be, they contended, almost a death-blow to Jewish settlement, while the moral effect on the Jews of America would be disastrous, since they were justly proud of the success of this experiment in land settlement.

Finding Bols obdurate, they had recourse to Deedes, and he, convinced of the reasonableness of their protest,

<sup>1</sup> One of the founders of the Zionist movement in England.

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prepared to do battle. He first took up the question with Clayton, his immediate chief, then with Bols himself, and, when he remained unpersuaded, direct with Allenby. For three or four weeks the fate of Petah Tikvah hung in the balance, but Deedes never relinquished his purpose nor allowed refusal to discourage him. At last Allenby decided to invite Weizmann and Sieff to dinner and to hear what they had to say. That is a dinner at which one would have liked to be present. On the one hand was Allenby, surrounded with the immense prestige of a victorious British Commander, the conqueror of Jerusalem; on the other hand was Weizmann, a Manchester Professor of chemistry, British by naturalization but by birth a Russian Jew. Only those who know well the hidden springs of an Englishman's pride, often a secret from himself, the belief in his traditions, his race and his institutions which at times may give an unconscious arrogance to his carriage, will appreciate the drama of this meeting between Allenby and Weizmann, a "foreigner" and a Jew.

But the protagonists were not ill-matched. Allenby could be tempestuous; and he was impatient of small men and small things, but he had inherited with his English traditions a love of justice. And behind that formidable exterior lay another quality which frequently and disconcertingly appears in English men of action, a shy, secret vein of poetic feeling. The weapons of Weizmann were an intelligence sharpened by the most sensitive perceptions, a singleness of purpose which sought no personal ends and a moral fearlessness equal to that of Deedes. And something else he had also, a charm of manner which, as Deedes says in another place, is the gift "which sets all one's acts and words in diamonds, instead of in the plain setting of those who have it not".

Of the conversation at that dinner and of the arguments advanced by Weizmann I have no record, save that at the



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last he said to Allenby, "If a General captures Haifa or Damascus, what more is it in history than to capture Liège or Lille? But if we Jews follow him in his conquests, his name goes down to history for all time, in the Jewish Bible."

He spoke (did he know it?) to a man who had studied his Bible with the passionate absorption of Cromwell's Ironsides, and who, in the campaign on which he was then engaged, had based his plans on the study of the wars of Joshua. Petah Tikvah was spared and continued to flourish.<sup>1</sup>

Following this letter which contains the reference to the dinner with Allenby and Weizmann, Deedes writes fully and frequently to his mother about the Jewish question. Mr. Sieff, who later came to know Deedes very well, told me that he considered that this was one of the formative periods of Deedes' life. The Palestine campaign was drawing to a close and he was turning his mind already to post-war problems, problems which were to be tackled and solved first at home, in the heart of England, as is abundantly clear from scores of allusions scattered throughout his letters, over many years. But the close contact, through Dr. Weizmann and many others, with the aspiration towards nationhood of a people who, for fifteen hundred years, had been sojourners in the lands of others, set his feet upon the road which he was to travel for the next five years. In one of the letters of this period, in which he sums up the philosophy of Zionism in its noblest aspects, one may understand why he temporarily put aside the desire, which had lain at the core of his heart ever since he was a young man, to work among the poorest and most unhappy of his own people, and accepted the onerous burden of administration in Palestine from 1920 to 1923.

<sup>1</sup> This is Mr. Israel Sieff's account of the conversation; it is, of course, a recollection and does not pretend to be a verbatim report.

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“ Since last writing ”, so runs this letter, “ I went over to Jaffa one day to call on Dr. Weizmann, head of the Zionist Commission, and had a long talk with him. Owing to his previous knowledge of me and of what — in a humble way — I have been able to do in forwarding his aims, he has been very outspoken and frank in his communication to me and we have, I think, established a firm friendship. This question, Zionism, can I think almost be called one of the big world-questions. Whether or no one believes in the possibility of the realization of the aims of the forward section of the party, *e.g.* the formation, at some distant date, of a Jewish Government in Palestine, there is, apart from this practical (or impractical, according to one’s opinion) side of the question, much else that may proceed from their programme.

“ Those who do not wish, as yet, to consider the question of a Jewish Government, rely on the creation in Palestine of a ‘ cultural home ’ for Jews throughout the world. One tangible form which this idea will take will be the creation of a University, but, generally speaking, their idea is that Jews throughout the world should look towards Palestine as their spiritual centre and the cradle of their race, thereby making a bond of union between them and emphasizing the fact that they are a nation and not only a sect.

“ Others who see further (whether their vision is true or faulty I know not) see in Palestine and the polity there to be set up, the nucleus of the future international state.”

Then, in the next paragraph, he touches on some of the difficulties which beset the movement from within. There is no mention of the Arab problem, but at the time of writing the campaign was still in being, the Arabs of Syria and Northern Palestine were still under Turkish domination, while in the occupied territory all, Arabs, Jews and Christians, were under military governance. Moreover,

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the Arabs led by Emir Feisal and Lawrence had not yet made their decisive contribution to Allenby's plans.

"Anti-Zionists", Deedes continues, "oppose these views, fearing that by emphasizing their Jewish nationality they will lose their acquired nationality in the several states in which they may happen to reside. Moreover, they deny that they are a nation at all. This class forms what are called Assimilationists. Moreover (and here they may to a certain extent be right), they look on the whole movement as idealistic and impracticable. . . ."

The note of doubt sounded in the last sentence is as characteristic of Deedes as the welcome which he gives to the ideals of Zionism in the earlier passages and the help and encouragement which he has given at all times, from that day to this, to those who are striving for the moral elevation of their race and a healthy material development hitherto denied them. In his maturity Deedes has achieved a rare judiciousness of mind which permits him to appreciate the validity of all reasoned arguments, whether opposed to the tenets which he holds dear or not, to weigh them and to allow himself to be influenced by them. But he does not allow himself to be deflected by them from his purpose when, to his mind, the issue is clear in the realm of spiritual values. This intellectual dispassionateness is at times misleading; it may give the impression that he is half-hearted or even, it may be, on the side of the enemy, understanding by the enemy that injustice or inhumanity to which his interlocutor is opposed. But those who know Deedes best will testify that behind the calm of his exterior, the aloofness of his intellect, there is a steadfast passion of the soul by which, when the sum-total of his life is reckoned, he will have lightened a little the dark ways of humanity.

## Chapter Nineteen

THE problem of Zionism runs like a thread through Deedes' thoughts during the whole of the year 1918, but it is only one of many threads which, woven together, go to make up a pattern of varied achievement.

The work of relief among homeless and indigent peoples was by no means confined to the Jewish colonies and Deedes found much to do for the remnant of the Armenians who had been exiled three years before from Konya and Bursa (in Anatolia) and "had been driven down by stages to this part of the world, being now reduced to about a third of their original number and having suffered every kind of hardship and horror". The world quickly forgets the cruelties practised upon the helpless; its memory, it seems to me, is only for those who act and not for those who suffer, but the massacre and harrying of the Armenians will stand as one of the black pages among the many dark records of the human race.

Some indication of the help that Deedes was able to give to these unhappy people may be gathered from a letter written to him by the Prelate of the Armenians in Egypt. The formal occasion of the letter was to congratulate him on his promotion to be Lieutenant-Colonel<sup>1</sup> (in April 1918), but after the opening compliments the Bishop writes :

"The remembrance of your goodness, which were [*sic*]

<sup>1</sup> He is spoken of as Lieut.-Colonel in the list of officers who made the entry into Jerusalem given in the official history, but appears not to have been gazetted till April 1918.

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so very often displayed towards our unfortunate compatriots saved from the Turkish Army, is still fresh in our minds.

"We feel, still more, this sense of gratitude and indebtedness to you for, as we were given to know by the Armenian General Benevolent Union and by our beloved Prof. Mooradian, that exceptional kind interest and care which you have shown towards the still more miserable of our compatriots in that place [*i.e.* Palestine].

"We pray fervently to Almighty God, the Fountain of all goodness, to bless your excellent life and to grant you the entire sweetness of the happiness that flows from conscience rewarded."

I think this naïve epistle touched Deedes very much, for in his maturer years he has always valued the expression of personal regard far above formal or official recognition and, though so many of his papers have been lost, the letters which he has obviously wished to keep are those in which the personal note is sincere and genuine. The signatories of some of the letters are quite unknown to me, their names do not figure anywhere in his history and are those of people in humble or subordinate positions. But several letters are from officers who worked under him, and these make it clear that in this aspect of his life, as in all others, he maintained that simple and direct human contact which he believes to be the right rule of relationship. In one of his letters to his mother, after a visit of inspection to some of the large number of officers doing administrative work in occupied territory, for whom he was responsible, he told her how much he had enjoyed his trip. His officers, he said, seemed really to enjoy his visits, and after his return he received from them "such nice letters", saying that he had heartened and encouraged them, and he adds, with the simplicity which is one of his unexpected traits, that it was this pleasant personal side of things which gave him happiness.

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During these months of the spring and summer of 1918, Deedes makes small mention in his letters of the actual work of Intelligence. This was natural enough, since all letters were liable to go astray and the work of Intelligence was still of the highest importance. There was a continual trickle into our lines of Turkish deserters, Turkish prisoners were captured from time to time and, as has been already said, there was a vast body of Arab spies to be reckoned with. Moreover, in the big offensive which Allenby planned to begin in September, it was desirable that the enemy, from whom the preparations could not be concealed, should be misled as to the direction and the moment of the attack. To this end, when the troops were moved out of the Jordan valley, not only were their tents left standing but their horse-lines also, provided with dummy horses. Moreover the walls of Jericho were circumambulated, as in the days of Joshua, but this time by a procession of sleighs, drawn by mules, which were driven round and round the city at great speed, raising a mighty cloud of dust and giving the impression that a vast army was on the march. For how many of these ingenious devices and booby-traps Deedes was responsible I do not know, but he staged one little comedy on his own with Colonel Storrs, the Governor of Jerusalem. It was very simple. One day he telephoned to Colonel Storrs, who was awaiting his message, that it would be necessary to commandeer all the principal hotels in Jerusalem "for military purposes". Within a very short space of time the news was all over Jerusalem, and far into the countryside as well, that Allenby was about to set up his headquarters at Jerusalem.

On September 18th Allenby attacked at Nablus, to the north-east of Jerusalem, and by September 20th his troops had crossed the Plain of Esdraelon and captured Nazareth. Ten days later the Desert Mounted Corps was at the gates of Damascus.

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There are two letters of Deedes, written to his mother during this spectacular advance, and in both of them there sounds a note of triumph in the achievement which is to be found nowhere else in all his correspondence throughout the war.

In the first, dated September 24th, he writes, "you will have heard by now of the big success here, two whole armies wiped off the map and a third at this moment in parlous condition; this will have explained to you my extreme preoccupation during these last weeks which you may (or may not) have noticed. Since six weeks I have not been to bed before 12 or 12.30 and been awfully busy all day, as you can guess. However, my share was a very little one and all the credit is, as usual, to the troops. It was a most astonishing success. If you look at the map you will appreciate it; within forty-eight hours (less, I think) we had cavalry at Nazareth, Afule, Jenin, and the Turks absolutely hemmed in.

"We have the *whole* of their transport and guns, up to 30,000 prisoners, and more coming in. Deserters all over the country. Several Generals. Our casualties practically nothing compared with our gains. Now we have a glorious country open to us. I have been to Nablus and Tulkeram, but they tell me the country beyond is wonderful, the Plain of Esdraelon stretching from Mount Carmel in the West to Jordan and the hills of Gilead beyond, Hermon to the North, Nazareth and the sea of Tiberias. What a spring it will be up there!

"The taking over of such a vast tract again raises a host of administrative, political and civil problems, for a good many of which we come in. However, we are better off than when we took Jerusalem; we now have a large and efficient staff both at G.H.Q. and outside, so I chiefly have *direction*. . . ."

On September 28th, he continues the story:

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"... It was an extraordinarily complete victory, our prisoners some 46,000 up to date. . . . From our point of view,<sup>1</sup> what perhaps was of the greatest interest was the capture of enemy documents, which we found lying about in hastily quitted Army and Army Corps Headquarters, Turkish and German, the perusal of which gives us information of great value. From that point of view, namely an Intelligence one, the captures were almost unique in this war. Everyone, therefore, has been hard at work on these documents, for which I had a special staff ready.

"We have had to start a General Officers' mess at the prisoners-of-war compound, as we took about five or six Generals and may get more. [The] more important officer prisoners come over here to G.H.Q. and are seen by myself. We had one to lunch the other day, the C.G.S. of an Army Corps, and over a map discussed the operations with him. . . ."

That is another of the scenes at which one would have liked to assist ; to have lunched with a captured Chief of General Staff, politely entertained by his captors, and discussing with them, as one expert with others, the conduct of the operations in which he had been defeated.

"I was in Nablus", continues Deedes, "the day after it was taken, and summoned the Town Council and got that functioning." The towns we occupy are found as a rule in a surprisingly orderly state . . . the municipality (usually locals) remains and carries on the government until the arrival of officers brings administration. Our political officers usually get into the place first and get the machine started, and that is the procedure as we go along. Owing to my knowledge of Turkish civil administration, I come into the picture a good deal."

In these few sentences Deedes touches on an aspect of the British character in which we may justifiably take pride :

<sup>1</sup> He means, of course, the point of view of Intelligence.



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the love of orderly administration and the respect for civilian rights. Once the tide of war had ebbed from a town, British officers arrived hot-foot to restore as quickly as possible its normal life, to ensure that persons and property were respected, that markets were opened and people assured of their food supplies, that the sick, as well as the wounded, were cared for, and epidemics checked by preventing the accumulation of filth or the contamination of water. The authority of local government was firmly established once more in the saddle, backed by the authority of a victorious army. Allenby was not only great in the conduct of war, he also knew how to trust and to use men like Money, Clayton and Deedes in the work of restoring a country ravaged by war, and it is not the least of the tributes to this campaign that it could be said, "It was during these months of war that was laid the foundation of the sound and stable administration of Palestine which for over ten years went forward steadily and quietly".<sup>1</sup>

About the end of September Deedes was sent to Beyrut, to act as political adviser and representative of Allenby vis-à-vis the French. As the Turkish armies were overwhelmed, captured and dispersed by Allenby's advance the political problem began to rear its head; the French and the Arabs were watchful that the territorial concessions to which the British Government had agreed should at once come into operation and their jurisdiction be recognized. Palestine and Syria were therefore divided into three administrative zones. The first, known as Occupied Enemy Territory South, or the red zone, was the area of British administration and covered the country west of Jordan to the borders of Syria. The chief administrator was Sir A. W. Money and General Clayton was Chief Political Officer, with Deedes as his deputy. The second, Occupied Enemy

<sup>1</sup> *Official History of the War — Campaign in Egypt*, vol. ii, p. 301.

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Territory North, or the blue zone, covered Syria from north of Acre and was administered by Colonel de Piepapé for the French Government. The third zone, Occupied Enemy Territory East, was originally intended to be divided into two sections, A and B, in which French and British interests would respectively be recognized, though the whole zone was to be under the administration of General Ali Pasha el Rikabi, for the Arabs. In a very short time after the taking of Damascus, however, the Arab administration broke down, since the Arabs had neither the experience nor the personnel for such work. Allenby therefore reassumed responsibility for the whole area, A and B districts alike, an arrangement recognized and accepted by the French Government on November 7th, 1918.

On October 17th Deedes wrote from Beyrut that, from being officially Political Officer, he was now helping in the administrative work, at the request of the French military governor, and had a hand in most of the problems that arose. It was, he wrote, one whirl of hard work, but great fun and "when all goes so well and the end seems so near, what matter?" Once again, his intimate knowledge of Turkish civil administration, his ability to understand the psychological background of Turk, Arab and Syrian Christian alike made him the focal point round which gathered the hundred and one problems of occupied territory which have already been indicated. Inevitably he became the intermediary between the French officials and the Turkish and Arab functionaries.

But it was a delicate position for a British officer operating, and operating with marked success, in an area which the French regarded as strictly their own, and when Deedes was summoned back to British G.H.Q. on October 25th he felt that it was perhaps due to French fears lest he should be too firmly set in the saddle. He was very much disappointed; he believed that he had begun to bring order out of the tur-

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moil and his sudden recall would leave many unfinished plans, many unsolved knotty problems. Moreover, he regretted leaving the "very many friends amongst the Turks and Arabs here, made during three weeks". He was wrong, however, in his diagnosis, for when General Buckley arrived at Beyrut on October 28th, the French Administrateur-en-Chef told him that he considered Deedes indispensable and begged that he should be left in Beyrut for the present, and it was in recognition of his work in the French occupied zone that he was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour.

This he might regard in the nature of a personal triumph, for the experience of the last war showed that it was often more difficult to collaborate harmoniously with an ally than with a late enemy. But here also, as with the Turks and Arabs, he had the initial advantage of being able to talk with the French officers in their own language, which he speaks and writes elegantly as well as fluently. This accomplishment was no small asset since most Frenchmen, educated as they are to a pure and concise diction, cannot repress a feeling of irritation when they hear their beloved language barbarously mangled, as it is too often by the Englishman. Armed with this weapon, then, he was able to bring into play those other qualities which have distinguished his relations with men of all races and creeds, a sincerity of endeavour and a selflessness which admits of no thought of self-aggrandisement in the success of the work in hand, and cannot be deflected from its purpose by any considerations of *amour-propre*. Being human, he can be hurt by a wilful disregard of achievements which have cost him much, but he does not therefore abate his efforts nor turn aside.

He has, besides, the incalculable asset of that charm of manner which sets all one's words and actions in fine diamonds. It is difficult to say in what charm of manner consists. Other men of equal intellectual and moral worth have it not. Perhaps the unwearying courtesy, which never

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deserts him under any provocation, is one of the main ingredients. And then, he is incapable of playing the grandee, whatever his position, but within the limits of his time is accessible to all, so that no one, to his knowledge, is turned away as not being of sufficient importance to take up his time. But these are moral qualities and in the composite ingredients of charm the physical also enters. Deedes, as his portraits show, has never had harmony of feature, but the very fragility of his physique (which, in effect, can endure so much) seems to arouse even in his masculine friends an almost womanly touch of solicitude, while the habitual melancholy of his expression is irradiated at times by a smile of rare sweetness. His voice also, gentle and beautifully modulated, enlists the sympathy of the hearer and there is a literary elegance in his diction, when he is moved or in earnest, of which his writing gives no hint. But beyond this *catalogue raisonné* lies some quality of the inner man which defies analysis, but has brought to him through so many years the regard and love of so many people.

He remained at Beyrut, then, in harmonious co-operation with the French, till the armistice with Turkey was signed on November 1st. Then Allenby who, in a hasty passage through Beyrut, had patted him on the back and told him he had "done splendidly", called him again to G.H.Q. So at last he began to talk about leave, he who had taken no leave since he embarked for Gallipoli in February 1915. "I would, and did," he said, "do anything so long as the war lasted but . . . I begin to feel I owe something to my family and self — a little debt which might now be paid." He broached the subject to Allenby, saying that he would like to go home unless he was wanted in Turkey in the interregnum between the armistice and the settlement of the peace terms, and "the Chief" was very kindly and said "he never could be grateful enough for all I had done". But

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it was to Turkey that he was summoned, and on November 10th he was taken by a British destroyer from Haifa to Constantinople to report to Admiral Calthorpe, who had been appointed British High Commissioner, as his Military Attaché.

From now onwards the story of events in the Near and Middle East, and of Deedes' share in them, is tangled and obscure. Once victory had crowned achievement, once the war was won, the whole vast machinery of conquest entered on a phase of suspended animation. The mutual jealousies and rivalries of the Allies, the claims of British, French, Italian, Greek and Arab for spheres of influence, if not for territorial aggrandisement, in the old Ottoman Empire, engendered an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust in which wise decisions became all but impossible. Meanwhile civil government all over this huge area was breaking down and every group of the ill-assorted peoples within the empire was busy wreaking its vengeance for past wrongs. What the Ottoman Empire needed, what indeed the whole vast theatre of war needed, was a clear vision and a strong hand. But the vision was clouded, and there was no possibility of the strong hand when the soldiers of the victorious armies, who had fought so valiantly and endured so much, were discontented to the point of mutiny at the prospect of protracted police work. They were sick of war and they wanted to go home; nor is it surprising that the soldier from Lille or Bradford or a Middle West farm should fail to see why he should be kept in Smyrna or Konya, Beyrut or Bitlis, while other men went back to their families and obtained the first pick of civilian jobs. It is an illuminating experience to follow — as I have done in my search for information about the Allied Commission in Turkey — the year 1919 in the pages of *The Times*, from the first week of January to the last of December. Because it is a day-to-day record, it brings home, more vividly than is possible in

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the perspective of a dispassionate historical survey, the all but insoluble problems which faced the victorious Governments in attempting to frame the peace treaties. There was no stable government throughout the greater part of the Western hemisphere ; in Germany revolution and counter-revolution followed each other in waves of violence ; from Archangel to the Persian Gulf rapine and murder raged unchecked ; everywhere ambitious men seized power and imposed it by fire and sword until ousted by stronger men, or more fortunate ; throughout the ruined countrysides roamed marauding bands, as in the anarchic years of the fourth and fifth centuries ; over robbers and refugees alike loomed the twin spectres of famine and disease. Europe and Asia were in a state of deliquescence.

How could men sitting in Paris frame a wise policy for the discordant and often fantastic claims of groups whose hatred of each other surpassed their hatred of the defeated common foe, since the three powerful democracies, France, Britain and America, who might have been strong enough to impose their common will, were emasculated by the utter war-weariness of their own peoples ? The wonder is not that the peace treaties perpetuated injustices, left open sores, but that they did in so large a measure sustain and keep before the eyes of the world the ideal of the self-determination of small nations which they had blazoned on their flag.

Here and there in the chaos small groups of devoted men, soldiers, administrators, or the personnel of great charitable organizations, strove to bring some order and decency back to the life of men, and to relieve the physical sufferings of thousands of helpless victims. Without their efforts, often frustrated and always, it seemed, so slight a palliation of so vast an evil, the very standards of justice, mercy and pity might have vanished from the world. They kept the flame alight, as in the Dark Ages the Christian

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Church kept alight the flame of divine charity above the sea of barbarism that surged backwards and forwards over afflicted peoples.

Part of this grim drama of the Peace was played on the stage of Constantinople, and it is a matter of great regret that Deedes, who was there from November 1918 to August 1919, has kept no diary, while of those so often revealing letters of his to his mother only a few incomplete and scattered fragments remain.

When the Government of Enver and Talaat fell at the end of October 1918, Tewfik Pasha became Prime Minister. He was an old friend of Deedes and had been Ambassador in London at the outbreak of war, but this " nice, harmless old-world Turk " (as Deedes described him in 1914) was not the man to ride out the stormy passage of 1918 and 1919, with a defeated, disorganized Turkey being shorn of her empire, and the Allied High Commissioners, a symbol of victory, in Constantinople.

An article of *The Times'* Special Correspondent, on January 9th, 1919, draws a grim picture of the situation in Constantinople. Public security was sadly to seek, even in Pera and Galata where the High Commissioners had their quarters, and murders were of nightly occurrence, since the police were utterly corrupt, largely officered by members of the C.U.P., who connived at the political assassinations which were so easy to stage. The economic situation was desperate ; there was a shortage of coal and of transport ; gold had disappeared, prices were soaring, including the price of bread, though there was a sufficient stock of cereals in the country for all normal needs. In Anatolia brigandage was unchecked ; there was no money to pay for public services and all reforms were obstructed by corrupt officials who confined their activities to fishing in troubled waters. This must have been sad hearing for Deedes, who had laboured so ardently in 1912 and 1913, first in Anatolia and

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later in the Ministry of the Interior, to rid the land of the age-long curse of brigandage.

In this political and administrative chaos came the demand of Venezélos that the provinces of Smyrna and Bursa should be handed over to Greece because, he argued, the majority of the population were Greeks. Italy, not to be outdone, claimed Rhodes, the islands of the Dodecanese and the province of Aydin as her share of the spoil, and she, as well as Greece, cast covetous eyes on the valuable port of Smyrna. Here, indeed, was a problem to tax the foresight and the patience of the Allied statesmen, for they owed Venezélos much and he was invoking the rights of small nations.<sup>1</sup> But the one constructive and statesmanlike proposal was presented to the Peace Conference by the Aga Khan, the Ameer Ali and other influential Moslems, at the end of March.

They urged that in the occupied portions of the Ottoman Empire self-governing institutions, under the general control of the League of Nations, should be established, and they deplored the attempt to sever from Turkey those portions of her territory which, if not predominantly Turkish in population, were Turkish in culture, tradition and history. Had they been listened to, and had the League been a body able to enforce its decisions by weight of arms, much bloodshed might have been spared.

How, meanwhile, in this disorder, fared the Allied Commission? Again I quote *The Times'* Correspondent:<sup>2</sup>

"... The *corpus vile* of Constantinople submitted to Allied medicine is not an exhilarating spectacle. A farrago of High Commissioners, British, French, Italian and Greek, some of them admirals, some civilians, all of them with

<sup>1</sup> It should be put on record here, however, that General Metaxas opposed the Greek claim for the possession of Smyrna and Bursa from the very outset. He said, with rare political wisdom, that it would weaken, not strengthen the Greek nation, since these cities could only be held by force of arms.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, March 31st, 1919.



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civilian advisers endowed with nebulous powers . . . no one can see where they begin or end. Add two Commanders-in-Chief, one French, one British, the former supposed to be supreme in Turkey in Europe but to exercise his control through the British; the latter a bilateral being who is compelled to bestride the Bosphorus with his left leg, subservient to the motions of General Franchet d'Esperey, while his right leg is his own.

"Flavour with a dash of Allenby from Palestine and just a *souppçon* of the remains of a Turkish administration, and you have some idea of the hotch-potch. . . .

"By dint of the endless exercise of good-will and forbearance on the part of all these various authorities and their staffs, a few things have actually got done, but in general the Turk is left to gibber at the ineptitudes of his masters, so comparable to his own sweet futilities. . . ."

The political situation it was beyond the powers of the Commission to handle satisfactorily while the winds at Paris blew now hot, now cold. The work of the men on the spot was frustrated by the atmosphere of uncertainty, while the Turks who, after the Palestine campaign, had had a wholesome respect for the armies of the Allies, now disregarded with impunity the orders of their representatives. Colonel Ian Smith, who followed Deedes as Military Attaché, told me that even the disarmament clause of the Armistice was never carried into effect, since there was no adequate machinery for enforcing an order which was openly flouted by large numbers of Turks.

The "few things" which actually did get done were largely what Deedes calls *une œuvre de bienfaisance*, and they were not small things. There were many wrongs to be righted and many people to be succoured. There were thousands of Greek and Armenian prisoners to be repatriated and a great deal of confiscated property to be restored, including the property of the Armenian Church. There

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were hundreds of Christian women, girls and orphaned children, chiefly Armenian, to be rescued from Moslem harems and placed under the care of their own religious bodies ; there were some fifteen thousand Greek and Armenian refugees, nearly all women and girls, in the districts round Sivas and Konya, who needed food, shelter, education and finally settlement. In this work the Allied Commission had the invaluable help of two American ladies, Miss Graffan and Miss Kushman, who had remained throughout the whole war in Anatolia, striving to protect and succour these tragic women.

Of Deedes' part in this work of rescue I have no details, but it is safe to assume that he, with his experience of the refugee problem in 1912 and 1913, was competently equipped to deal with this vast amorphous mass of human misery. Nor is it necessary, having followed his career thus far, to stress the fact that wherever the need of help was greatest, there would his heart be found. A glimpse of him in this environment is given in a letter written by Admiral Webb<sup>1</sup> to Mrs. Deedes, in June 1919, in which he tells her that he feels very much for her in being still deprived of her son's presence after so many years, but, he continues, "the fact of the matter is that General Deedes has made himself so absolutely indispensable here that we really can't spare him, at any rate for the present. . . . He has done, and is doing, the work of half a dozen ordinary people, and everyone, Turk, Greek and Armenian alike, look to him as their natural spokesman and protector."

He did not lack official, as well as personal recognition. The Greek Government marked its appreciation of his work for Greek nationals in Turkey by giving him the Greek *Croix de Guerre*, although it had already, in 1918, conferred

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Sir Richard Webb, K.C.M.G., Assistant High Commissioner in Turkey, 1918-1920. He was, in effect, Acting High Commissioner, since the duties of Admiral Calthorpe, commanding the Mediterranean Fleet, often took him from Constantinople.

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on him the Order of St. Saviour.

"Yesterday", he writes to his mother, "showered more decorations on my devoted head, all of which I receive with one thought only, that they give you pleasure. . . . Amongst my friends it's getting rather a joke, having now collected six foreign decorations.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of fact, human nature being what it is, everyone is *au fond* pleased to get such trifles. . . ."

In the matter of police and prison administration the Allied Commission also effected some improvement. Under pressure from them a new Chief of Police was appointed, Halil Bey, an honest man and a courageous, who was anxious to co-operate with the Commission. Gradually the grosser abuses were checked, the most corrupt members of the police dismissed and murderers vigorously pursued and punished, whatever their political complexion. By the end of March the anarchic conditions in Constantinople described by *The Times* Correspondent in January had so far improved that ordinary citizens could go quietly about their business without carrying arms. But the cleansing of the Augean stable of the prisons was a long and hard business. There were thousands of prisoners, many of whom had already been imprisoned for twelve months or two years without trial, some for political offences, some for minor misdemeanours, or just simply on the denunciation of a personal enemy. They were herded with murderers, brigands and thieves in conditions of indescribable squalor; all were verminous, all were starved, many were diseased, but the condition of the prison hospitals was but little better than that of the prisons themselves. The wretchedness of these men, without occupation, without hope, sometimes without food, can barely be imagined.

<sup>1</sup> The Serbian Order of the White Eagle, 1916; the Egyptian Order of the Nile, 1917; the Italian Order of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus, 1918; the French Legion of Honour, 1918; the Greek Order of St. Saviour, 1918; the Greek Croix de Guerre, 1919.

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Admiral Webb and Deedes went the round of these infernos and drew up a series of reports which were published by Admiral Calthorpe. On the strength of this evidence, the Allied Commission vigorously pressed the Turkish Government to release at once all those who had been awaiting trial for more than three months, unless accused of murder, and to release all non-Moslems accused of political offences or desertion from the Turkish Army. Cemal Ferit Pasha, who had succeeded Tewfik Pasha as Vizier, showed a sincere desire to abolish this cruel state of things but he was himself the prisoner of an ancient and evil system which he had neither the money, nor the personnel, nor the time to reform. But by dint of effort and patience on the part of Deedes, backed by the authority of the Allied Commission, some amelioration of the lot of the prisoners was achieved.

The political situation, however, darkened when on May 14th the Greeks landed in Smyrna. Colonel Ian Smith, then representing the British Commission in Smyrna, had the unhappy task of informing Izzet Pasha that the Conference at Paris had agreed to this occupation, and of seeing the old man burst into tears. Colonel Smith's pity and indignation were further aroused when on the following day the Greek mob, whom the Greek authorities either failed, or did not try to control, marched Izzet Pasha and other prominent Turks along the quay to the ship in which they were to embark, forcing them at the point of the bayonet to cry "Long live Venezélos!"

Meanwhile the Allied Commission had not been informed of the contemplated landing, even the British Commission being in ignorance of the concession given by Lloyd George to Venezélos in Paris. The Commissioners were actually in session when the news arrived, and it fell to Deedes to take in to the Council Chamber the information of this unhappy *fait accompli*. He says he will never forget the

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consternation of those men, striving so hard to achieve collaboration and suddenly faced with what almost amounted to a *coup d'état*. Count Sforza, the Italian High Commissioner, for whom Deedes had a warm personal regard, dared not trust himself to speak but got up and rushed from the room, banging the door behind him.

Cemal Ferit Pasha and a Turkish delegation went to Paris to protest and were received by the Council of Four in June. They protested not only against the cession of Smyrna to the Greeks, but of Aydin to the Italians, and insisted that the present Turkish Government disassociated itself utterly from the Government of Enver and Talaat and should not be saddled with its crimes. In effect, they said: Leave us in Constantinople under any form of control, leave us Asia Minor, and we shall at least have a chance of developing stable government. Take Constantinople and the littoral of Smyrna and Aydin and you strangle Turkey, which can be nothing more than a congeries of backward and discontented groups, eternally resentful of their powerful neighbours.

Unhappily, the statesmanlike proposal of the Aga Khan, the wise and prudent advice to his people of General Metaxas, could gain no hearing in the fevered atmosphere of 1919, and the delegation returned empty-handed to face a situation in which the authority of their own Government was badly shaken.

So, at this juncture, one man took the law into his own strong hands. Mustafa Kemal went to Anatolia, avowedly with the intention of suppressing brigandage, actually to raise his standard among a broken and despairing people, fast relapsing into anarchy, as Alfred the Great once raised it among the dispersed and defeated Saxon tribes. On July 9th he invoked the Provincial Assemblies of the Eastern Provinces of Anatolia and began that amazing regeneration of Turkey which will rank in history as one of the supreme

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examples of what can be done by a man of single purpose, iron will and political sagacity. Mustafa Kemal founded the new Turkey after bitter fighting but, once his frontiers were free, his whole aim was to consolidate and strengthen his people within them. The wisdom which led him to avoid all attempts at territorial aggrandisement, to seek good terms with his neighbours, to lop off the dead branches of provinces inhabited by alien and discontented minorities, has borne sound fruit. Of his political philosophy this is not the place to speak, but it is possible that, when the history of our era comes to be written, it is he who will be regarded as the dominant figure.

For one moment Deedes touched the fringe of his fate. The Allied Commission had received information that Mustafa Kemal was going to Anatolia to rally the Turks to defy the claims of Greece and Italy, even in the teeth of the Turkish Government at Constantinople, and Deedes was sent down to the Porte in haste, at midnight, to warn Cemal Ferit Pasha. But when he had spoken, the old man leant back in his chair, put the tips of his fingers together and said slowly, "You are too late, Excellency; the bird has flown!"

At that very hour Mustafa Kemal was crossing the Bosphorus, and on May 19th, 1919, he landed at Samsun, that same port at which Deedes had landed when he set forth on his expedition with Colonel Hussein Bey and "Jumbo" in 1913. Mustafa Kemal never went back to Constantinople till he returned as Atatürk, the Father and Leader of his people.

Failing direct evidence, one may none the less assume, from Deedes' oft-expressed conviction that Turkey should not be hopelessly dismembered and should retain Constantinople, that he did not find himself very happy as one of the representatives of the Allied policy which was prepared to see the Greeks and Italians controlling the

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littoral of Anatolia. But throughout the spring and summer he could not bring himself to ask for leave. "So long as there is a job of work to be done", he wrote, "I *cannot* find it in my conscience to leave it undone. . . . We *are* having rather critical times here. Rightly or wrongly I believe myself to be helping . . . and if things boiled up here and I were idling at home I should *bitterly* regret it. . . ." But at last in August, after four and a half years' absence, he did go home on leave, since the peace terms with Turkey were apparently as far off as ever.

He did not want to return. He wanted, as he had always wanted, to "take up the White Man's Burden" (it is his phrase) in England. His experience of the England of 1919, of the glaring contrasts of poverty and wealth, of poverty without hope and of wealth too often without responsibility, of the exacerbation of industrial conflict, of the feverish tempo of daily life, made such work as he wished to do more than ever urgent.

And he could feel that he was released from any obligation to return to Turkey when he heard from Admiral Webb, on September 7th, that the work of the Allied Commission was "pretty well moribund as an Armistice job", and that if Deedes returned it would be to the position of a Military Attaché in peace-time, a position largely social, if with some small opportunity of helping forward civil reforms. Deedes had not escaped from the social obligations of A.D.C. to the Governor of Malta, in 1911, to reassume them as Military Attaché in 1918. This the Admiral well understood, for he ends his letter with the words, ". . . I think every Englishman with the high gifts . . . with which you are endowed owes it to his country to come to her help in working out the terrific problems now facing her".

I cannot forbear, before leaving this chapter of Deedes'

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life, from reproducing the description of the one little scene of humour which lightens the gloomy tale of internal disorder, external vacillation, mutual rivalries and lost opportunities which was the background to the valiant efforts of the Allied Commission in Constantinople.

After the Greek entry into Smyrna, a committee of influential Turks was formed in Constantinople to oppose their claims and those of the Italians. The ladies of Constantinople also formed a committee, and they, as well as the men, sent a deputation to wait on the British High Commissioner. Deedes, who was deputed to receive the ladies, wrote an account which purported to be an official dispatch from the High Commissioner to the Foreign Office. He speaks of himself in the third person and praises himself extravagantly for those qualities of social aplomb in which he has always considered himself to be so miserably deficient!

“ . . . Forewarned of this visit,” the dispatch runs, “ though powerless to avert it, I had deputed my Military Attaché to receive the deputation. My choice of a representative was dictated not only by considerations connected with the military character of the recent proceedings at Smyrna, but also by others of a more personal nature. I need not dwell on these further than to say that Brigadier-General Deedes is distinguished by a manner which appeals to all that is best, and disarms all that is most ferocious, in the feminine character.”<sup>1</sup>

“ I however associated with my Military Attaché as chaperon the Second Political Officer of the High Commission. Mr. Ryan is a married man. . . .

“ The deputation consisted entirely of daughters of deceased Grand Viziers, with the exception of Mademoiselle S—— H——, a stalwart of the international feminist movement. . . . They had come, two of their number

<sup>1</sup> This, I may say, is true!



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went on to say simultaneously in French, to protest in the name of that society (*i.e.* the highest Turkish society) against the decision of the Peace Conference to hand over Smyrna to . . . a race with which the Turks had lived on the worst possible terms for six centuries. While this was being translated by a third lady into English for the benefit of General Deedes, whose military accoutrements misled the deputation as to his linguistic attainments, the eldest member of the party interposed a reference in Turkish to that justice for which the British race is still notorious in the East. This observation gave a great stimulus to the volubility of the deputation, and it was still further increased when General Deedes, stung into self-revelation by the assumption that he needed a Franco-English interpreter, let fall a remark in Turkish. The remainder of the interview produced on Rear-Admiral Webb and others of my staff, who followed the proceedings from the nearest keyholes, the effect of a sustained barrage.

“I regret to state that my Military Attaché was placed at a disadvantage for which he was himself in a small measure responsible, and that most excusably. In making his dispositions on the arrival of the deputation, he had placed the youngest, the most energetic, and, I may add, the prettiest of his visitors in the chair closest to his own. On discovering that he spoke Turkish like a native of Smyrna, this lady took advantage of her proximity to the General to concentrate upon him the full force of a torrential eloquence. She refused to be placated by the inevitably somewhat feeble rejoinder that the Peace Conference and not he had taken the decision of which she complained. A slice had been cut, she said, from the living body of the Ottoman Empire of which she was a member, and by that act a bleeding member. How could General Deedes, himself a member of that nation which took the lead among the carvers, disclaim responsibility for the shedding of her blood?

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"While this unequal duel was proceeding on the deputation's right wing, the Second Political Officer was engaged by the remaining four ladies with well-combined vigour. Bred in the cautious traditions of the Embassy Dragomanate, Mr. Ryan has evolved a single formula for use with all deputations of this kind . . . he therefore waited till the elder ladies, with whom General Deedes had left him to cope, were more or less exhausted by their own vehemence, and then delivered himself of his formula, investing it with as much freshness as he found possible after three days of constant iteration. . . .

"The ladies, who displayed far more spirit than any of the male deputations which had preceded them, said they realized very well that France had joined in the decision. But, they added with asperity, they were really astonished at America. . . . Turkey had indeed been guilty of fatal errors . . . [but] was she to be subjected to yet further castigation at the hands of the Entente Powers, at the hands of England, on whose imperishable friendship she had felt she could rely, even when entering the war against her at the instigation of four adventurers who did not even belong to the best Turkish society? . . ."

After thus disposing, in one damning sentence, of the Government of Enver and Talaat, the ladies withdrew, declaring, in spite of deprecatory murmurs from General Deedes and Mr. Ryan, that they were convinced they could count on their support. The dispatch concludes by venturing to suggest that the attention of the Army Council should be drawn to the combination of gallantry and reserve shown by General Deedes, and that Mr. Ryan should be offered the post of first consul in the Amazonian Republic "if it be true that the constitution of such a state has been decided upon by the Council of Three, Four or Five".

## *Chapter Twenty*

THE time was not yet ripe for Deedes to take up the work he so ardently desired.

After he reached England he consulted his cousin, General Charles Deedes,<sup>1</sup> who was at the War Office, as to the advisability of immediately sending in his papers and so freeing himself for the important change in his career which he had long contemplated. But General Charles Deedes, and also Wyndham's old Chief, General Bartholomew,<sup>2</sup> urged that in the interests of the Empire he should not yet do so, since conditions in the Middle East were dangerously unsettled and he might be urgently needed in Constantinople or Palestine. It is not within his nature to allow his private wishes to weigh against an unequivocal call of duty, even when, as in this case, they are without egotism, and he forbore.

Within a fortnight of his letter, the call came. On September 22nd he received from General Clayton the following telegram: "Will you come to Egypt for a few months to help me in reorganizing Department of Public Security? Morice has left and matter is one of extreme urgency in view of present situation and possible developments, as without an efficient system of control and Intelligence, we are practically helpless against subversive elements, which are working in Egypt and from abroad. Lord Allenby approves, and both Sultan and Prime Minister

<sup>1</sup> General Sir Charles Deedes, K.C.B., D.S.O.

<sup>2</sup> General Sir William Bartholomew, G.C.B., D.S.O.

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warmly support the idea of your undertaking this work. You would work in Ministry of Interior as a civilian, but responsible only to High Commission through Adviser. You would, of course, be free to leave when you wished. . . . Sincerely hope you will accept. If so, what would be earliest date could reach Egypt?"

Egypt had been an unhappy land since the signing of the Armistice. The complete break-up of the old Ottoman Empire, the demand for national self-determination which fermented throughout the world, not only among large homogeneous groups, such as the Arabs of Iraq or the Hejaz, but among the bewildering concourse of minorities, where religious and racial differences overlapped and intermingled, could not leave Egypt untouched. There was a body of young Egyptians who bitterly resented the presence of the British High Commissioner and of British civil officials as an encroachment on the status of Egyptian nationalism, and their discontent was carefully fostered by agents from without and some of the old C.U.P. groups from within. They were chiefly to be found in the towns, but in the country districts, particularly in the fringe of land west of the Nile, there were bands of armed and roaming Bedouin who profited by the lack of a stable government and efficient police force to terrorize the countryside by every form of lawlessness, from petty pilfering to open murder.

On March 24th nine British officers were dragged from a train travelling between Cairo and Luxor and murdered in cold blood. In spite of strong British protests no effort was made to seek out and punish the murderers.

A week earlier, on March 17th, Cairo had been the scene of street rioting which led to much bloodshed, and British soldiers had had to protect the palace of the Sultan from the rioters. It appeared as if these scenes would be repeated at the end of April, when Rushdi Pasha's Government resigned in protest against American recognition of the

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British Protectorate in Egypt, and all the Egyptian officials in Cairo came out on strike. Violence was prevented by the strong action of Allenby, but he had, at this moment, the impossible task of administering Egypt as High Commissioner and of acting as the General Officer Commanding the whole of the armed forces in the Middle East, and the danger of widespread rioting was imminent. The British Government therefore sent Lord Milner and a Special Commission to enquire into the causes of the disorder and to report on the best course for promoting the peace and prosperity of Egypt.

In the middle of July Lord Milner presented his report, which did not exonerate his own Government from some share of the blame. He found that, though nationalist aspirations evoked by the Fourteen Points were the most obvious, there were other and deeper causes. The educational facilities which, since 1905, at the instance of the British Government, had been made available to large numbers of young Egyptians, had produced a class which could no longer be content with the life of the fellahin but which had found no proper outlet for its energies or abilities. This body of intelligentsia, unemployed and frustrated, felt that they were debarred from all administrative posts by the presence of the British, and from professional posts by prejudice against their origin. In their discontent, they were neither tactfully nor sympathetically handled by the British officials then in the country. The older officials, with long experience of the country and the sympathy that comes from knowledge, had largely been replaced, particularly in the country districts, by younger men who had not served their apprenticeship, who had come on the heels of a victorious army, and whose attitude towards the discontents was too often one of impatience.

There were other causes, economic and administrative, with which this is not the place to deal at length, and there

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was the important psychological factor of the successful revolt of Mustafa Kemal, which was not to be ignored. Egypt was linked with Turkey by personal ties as well as by their common religion, and *The Times* Special Correspondent wrote that "Descendants of Mehmet Ali still have their roots in Turkey, lands in Thasos and Kavala, mothers, aunts and cousins living on the Bosphorus . . . to whom Constantinople and not Cairo is the true metropolis. . . ." <sup>1</sup>

Into this imbroglio Deedes, whose lot it apparently was to be always looking for trouble, was plunged in the early autumn of 1919.

From the few references, direct or indirect, which I have been able to find concerning these months I gather that he quickly adopted his familiar tactics of making as many personal contacts as possible, by frequent and protracted visits of inspection. This he had done as a young man in Tripoli and Anatolia, he had done it during the latter part of the Palestine campaign, when he had some fifty officers working under him in the administration of occupied territory, and he was later to do it in Palestine again. He believes that personal contact between individuals is necessary for the success of any administration; it allows of the airing of grievances and the adjustment of difficulties which, beginning as small irritants, may grow to unwieldy proportions if neglected. And behind this practical consideration lies the belief which is at the core of his religious life, that neither principalities nor powers, neither the state, nor the race, nor any formal institution has true reality, but only the individuality of man, and that in the slow perfecting of the relation between man and man the progress towards civilization is alone possible. And for the word "civilization" Deedes would substitute "the Kingdom of God upon earth".

Holding such a faith, and armed with the weapons of

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, September 2nd, 1919.

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knowledge, discretion, patience and insight, it was not difficult for Deedes to make his contact with bewildered and apprehensive people who saw their national life disrupted by political violence and endangered by private lawlessness. He could disarm even those who, stung by an irritable sense of inferiority before the British intruder, were most ready to see an affront. When he had occasion to see a Mudir, or Mayor, he treated him with the deference due to a man who is an important personage in his own locality, and never offered him the tacit insult of letting him appear belittled in the eyes of his own people. He extended his hospitality to those whom he had come to see officially and after he had made his rounds of inspection would invite them to lunch or dinner. On one occasion he was the host of a Police Commandant who was coal-black of complexion and had fought in the Egyptian Army at Omdurman. Another time it was he who was guest, and after a "huge dinner" given him by the Mudir (Deedes was used to Oriental hospitality) they sat up far into the night, discussing local politics, Deedes profiting much by this insight into the problems, bickerings, venalities or honest efforts of this small community. He speaks of another conversation too, in one of his letters, this time with a young Egyptian land-owner who had been educated in England. The young man was a patriot and a reformer, he wanted to develop and improve his land and his people, and was full of plans for the reform of housing, for the establishment of more and better schools, for improved methods of farming which would carry, as a corollary, better wages for labourers. He found a ready listener and, says Deedes, they talked each other's heads off, with great mutual advantage. He adds, "What opportunities there are in this country to encourage such people, who meet you more than half-way when they find you're human".

On all these visits, once the formal reception and the

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inspections and enquiries relative to public security were over, Deedes asked to see the schools and any local industries which were carried on. On every occasion he found the Egyptians pleased and eager to show the efforts they were making to develop a backward and illiterate people. They realized that his request was not that of a visiting dignitary making a polite gesture but of a man with a deep and sincere interest, one moreover who knew how to appreciate the difficulties and the value of their achievement. Wherever he went he left behind that trail of sympathy which has followed him throughout his journeyings to and fro in so many parts of the world, and when the time came to leave Egypt, Egyptians as well as British saw him go with regret. ". . . I am now", he writes in December 1919, "begged by many to remain in the country, and it's interesting that this should be so as showing that in the case of those they like, they are anxious we should help them. . . . I am greatly taken with Egyptian country life, its agricultural, social and educational problems open a wide field for work. Interest and sympathy I find more than reciprocated."

What the steps were which he advocated for the restoration of public security he naturally does not mention in his letters, and his official report is in the archives of the Foreign Office. But from the context of his letters and even more from a knowledge of the man himself, one may be sure that the suppression of lawlessness was merged in the general picture, in which the removal of legitimate grievances and encouragement and help to all those striving for reform, opened a wider horizon.

A letter written to him by a member of the Egyptian Department of the Foreign Office, in July 1920, supports this assumption.

"My dear Deedes," runs the letter, "Ingram has just sent me your report on police organization in Egypt, which I am reading with the greatest interest.



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“Your general observations are of such interest and importance that, if you have no objection, I would like to have the report entered so as to be on record in our files in case matters, on which you have made recommendations, should come up for consideration in the Foreign Office. . . .”

If it seems a pity that he did not remain in Egypt — as for a brief moment he himself was inclined to feel — there was awaiting him another piece of work of an even more arduous nature.

The end of Allenby's brilliant campaign in November 1918 was the beginning of discord and disturbance in the lands which he had conquered, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Transjordan. It is rather commonly believed that the root of the trouble lies in the irreconcilable differences between Jewish and Arab claims in Palestine, but though, within recent years, it is this aspect which has loomed most largely and filled the political horizon, in the years immediately following the Armistice other thorny problems beset the path of the British Government striving to honour its many, and sometimes incompatible, obligations.

From a note in Deedes' diary early in 1916 it is clear that the Arabs of Syria were strongly averse from the idea of being under French domination, though they were prepared to concede to the French an economic zone of influence. Representative Syrian Arabs even went so far as to ask Deedes and Clayton “if they had sold them to the French”, and when the provisions of the Sykes-Picot agreement became known in Cairo, Deedes' comment was, “This definitely loses us the adherence of the Arab and Turkish parties”. In another place he says, “What it comes to is this, the Turks can offer territorial integrity, we can offer independence but not territorial integrity. . . .”

Here then, already, was one possible source of Arab discontent. Another lay in the fact that the Shereef of Mecca wanted an assurance from the British Government

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that they would recognize and support an Arab Empire comprising all the countries under Turkish rule with predominantly Arab populations, whereas (Deedes notes) many Arabs concurred in thinking that, while most Arabs would recognize a spiritual head of the Arab world, they were not prepared to accept one single political leader. The Arabs of Iraq and the Arabs of Syria were not prepared, in 1916, for one homogeneous Arab state.

After the conquest of Palestine the Emir Feisal, leader of the armies of the Hejaz, was crowned in Damascus and claimed sovereignty over Lebanon and those parts of Syria lying westward of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo. The French contested his claim and expelled him from Damascus. He took refuge with the British at Haifa, and was eventually offered the Kingdom of Iraq by the British Government and became its first Arab king. His brother, Abdullah, became Emir of Transjordan, in recognition of his services to the British cause. Later, Ibn Saud occupied Mecca and the coast of the Hejaz. So, as Deedes had foreseen, the ideal of a Pan-Arab state became a series of Arab states, not without mutual jealousies and rivalries.

Into this complex situation was woven the problem of the Jewish National Home in Palestine.

With this great and difficult controversy it is not my business, nor am I competent, to deal fully. If the word "Palestine" was not expressly used in the negotiations with the Shereef, if when Allenby entered Jerusalem he made no mention of the Jewish National Home in his address, the British Government had already given an undertaking to the Zionist organization through A. J. Balfour, who had long been sympathetic to Jewish aspirations. And in July 1917, the Zionist formula for the setting up of a Jewish national home was shown to Sir Mark Sykes, to President Wilson, who approved it in principle, and was sent by Baron Edmond de Rothschild to Balfour. The form of

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government in Palestine was not yet decided upon, though in February 1919 the Zionist organization asked the Peace Conference that Great Britain should be appointed the mandatory power. It was not until May 1920 that the text of the Balfour Declaration was officially read at Nablus by Sir Lewis Bols, representing the G.O.C. Middle East, and for two more years the question of what country should assume the mandate was left unsettled. Only in April 1922, at the Conference of San Remo, was the appointment of Great Britain as the mandatory power finally clinched.

Many competent observers believe that in this uncertain and fumbling diplomacy, far more than in any original mistrust between Arabs and Jews, lay the seeds of the unhappy controversies which have darkened the years between 1919 and 1939.

There is a remarkable document which goes far to support the view that there was no inherent and insuperable enmity between Jew and Arab at the close of the war. This is an agreement drawn up between the Emir Feisal and Dr. Weizmann, representing the Zionist organization, on January 3rd, 1919.

The preamble states that, "mindful of the racial kinship and ancient bonds existing between the Arabs and the Jewish people, and realizing that the surest means of working out their national aspirations is through the closest possible collaboration in the development of the Arab state in Palestine . . .", the signatories agree upon the following articles :

" . . . *Article II.* — Immediately following the completion of the deliberation of the Peace Conference, the definite boundaries between the Arab State and Palestine shall be determined by a Commission to be agreed on by the parties thereto."

(Let it be noted that it was 1924 before the boundaries of Palestine were determined, five years after this declaration.)

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“ *Article IV.* — All necessary measures shall be taken to encourage and stimulate immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale, and as quickly as possible to settle Jewish immigrants upon the land . . . in taking such measures the Arab peasant and tenant farmers shall be protected in their rights and shall be assisted in forwarding their economic development.

“ *Article VI.* — The Mohammedan Holy Places shall be under Mohammedan control.”

Unfortunately, this fair prospect, which might have brought peace and prosperity to so many individuals, was invalidated by a reservation appended by the Emir Feisal. In it he states : “ If the Arabs are established as I have asked in my manifesto of January 4th, addressed to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, I will carry out what is written in this agreement. If changes are made, I cannot be answerable for failing to carry out this agreement.”<sup>1</sup>

In the vicissitudes of Emir Feisal's fortunes, crowned in Damascus, a fugitive in Haifa, it was by the British Government that he was reinstated in Baghdad, but his dream of a homogeneous Arab state was disappointed and he would not be held to his agreement with Dr. Weizmann. But, after reading it with particular attention to Articles II and IV, it becomes clear that, in January 1919, Palestine, in the view of this powerful Arab leader, was not included in the Arab State and was to be administered with special regard to Jewish aspirations, and one must ask oneself whether the bitter gulf between these two peoples was inevitable or whether their enmity has not been fostered by those with their own interests to serve, whether national, religious, social or even basely personal.

It was to this storm-centre that Deedes was about to be summoned.

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Mr. M. Lubin, Dr. Weizmann's nephew, for a photostatic copy of this agreement and Emir Feisal's reservation.

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Quite early it was recognized by the Peace Conference that Palestine presented a problem of great difficulty, and by the summer of 1919 the unrest within its borders and in Syria was causing uneasiness to the French and British Governments. Though Palestine was still under military rule, Allenby had been summoned to Egypt, while men like Deedes and Clayton, who knew the country and its peoples and had helped to give it wise and stable administration during the war, had been sent elsewhere. Their place was hard to fill.<sup>1</sup> It was an open secret that among the senior British officers there was strong opposition to the Jewish National Home, and Colonel Waters Taylor, who became C.G.S. to General Bols after Allenby had gone to Egypt, was openly inimical to the idea. The attitude of these men encouraged the Arabs to resist and embarrassed the British Government in the fulfilment of its solemn pledge. In making this criticism I do not of course suggest that the officers failed in loyalty or hesitated to perform the duties expressly laid upon them, but their likings and antipathies tended to create an atmosphere in which a just balance between rival claims was difficult. Most British officers have a natural sympathy for Arabs and a natural dyspathy for Jews.

In this difficult and potentially dangerous situation the thoughts of some men in the Foreign Office and the War Office turned to Deedes, with his experience of the intricacies of Turkish administration and his admirable capacity for working with the most diverse and antagonistic elements and retaining the confidence of all. Apparently he was approached on the subject of going to Palestine when he was on leave in England in September 1919, for there is among his papers the shorthand note of a letter sent to General

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Meinertzhagen, of battle of Gaza fame, was appointed Chief Political Officer after Clayton left. He drew up a report, criticizing the work of the political officers and their general approach to the problem.

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Bartholomew dated November 14th, 1919, from Cairo, in which he refers to it.

"When I was at home", he writes, "you alluded several times to the question of the post of Chief Administrator in Palestine (under the Mandate), and on the last occasion on which I saw you, you gave me to understand that my name was seriously being considered in connection with the post.

"From the very few remarks which I, however, made to you on the subject, you will have gathered that I am anxious to take up work in England (on social and industrial questions) and am averse from occupying so conspicuous a post as that under consideration. The above aspects of the question, however, are purely personal and merit no more consideration than one should ever give to one's personal inclinations.

"But if, indeed, my name is seriously being considered for this post I feel obliged to express an opinion on a subject that would otherwise have been no concern of mine. . . .

"I can imagine no more important and difficult post in the gift of H.M. Government than that of Civil Administrator or Governor of Palestine under the Mandate.

"There is no need for me to enlarge on the political, financial and economic problems to be solved there, and should I be exaggerating if I said that the task is worthy of a Cromer? Am I not right in saying that the very best man to be found should be sent?

"Is it really and seriously contemplated to give a post of this nature to a person of my ability, standing and experience? I cannot bring myself to believe that such an error could be committed, and let me add that if it were I could not consent to be a party to it, except under compulsion. . . . I entertain no illusions whatever as to my abilities. The post, of first-rate importance, must be given to a first-, not second-rate man.

"If my name is not seriously considered, please burn

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this letter and forget its contents. If it is seriously considered, I beg you to make use of the contents and refuse the appointment on my account. My authorizing you to do so will be an earnest of my good faith (uncharitable people might say this letter was written with another object in view).

“ . . . Please accept this letter in the spirit in which it is written.”

That letter is characteristic of many aspects of Deedes' complex nature. He always classes himself as a “second-rate” man, and sees a wide and impassable gulf between the second-rate and the first-rate. His own shortcomings he perceives with a clarity that many of us might well emulate; what perhaps he does not see are certain qualities of the heart and soul that give him a spiritual eminence among his fellow-men and fit him for leadership. But the shrinking from “so conspicuous a position” is also an ineradicable trait, bred of what obscure factors in his nature and his early environment it is impossible to say, but strong enough and persistent enough to have affected some of the major actions of his life. Nothing but an overwhelming sense of his duty will bring him under the glare of publicity; to walk along the strip of red carpet and mount the dais reserved for notables, to take the salute from the Army on the King's Birthday, to be beribboned and treated with deference as one set apart from the common run, is more than distasteful to him, it is contrary to that ideal of poverty and humility of which Christ is the prototype. Characteristic also is the simplicity, almost naïveté, of the letter. To one who has perused so much of his private and intimate writing and seen how the shy and sensitive boy, bred in a feminine home, persists in the efficient and diabolically energetic man, it is an endearing trait, but it is open to misconception. To those who see only the surface it appears a pose, or even a veiled hypocrisy. They cannot believe that a man with his

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record, his reputation, his capacity for an intellectual vigour that drives straight to the essentials of a subject, can genuinely harbour this self-doubt and self-mistrust. But so it is ; he means what he says always, and he has been fortunate in finding so many men who have understood him in the sense in which he has spoken.

Two months after he had written to General Bartholomew there was still, apparently, discussion in England as to his possible appointment. In January 1920 he dined with Mr. Herbert Samuel in Cairo and Mr. Samuel was, apparently, anxious for the appointment of Deedes and told him that, when at home, he had written to Balfour on the subject. So Deedes spoke of his "semi-official" letter of November, setting out once more the reasons why he felt unable to accept. He confided to his mother (to whom he was describing the conversation) that he hoped he had not given the impression that he would accept, if pressed sufficiently to do so. His overwhelming desire was still to return home, but he concluded by saying that his mind was "reluctantly an open one" and he would not refuse to do his duty, whether it should be in Egypt or in Palestine.

At Easter 1920 there occurred in Jerusalem the first disturbances that had happened since Allenby's entry : street rioting and Arab demonstrations against the Jewish National Home. A military Court of Enquiry was set up, the findings of which were not published but must have been sufficiently serious to drive home to the British Government the danger of permitting this uncertain and ill-defined situation to be prolonged. On April 26th, at San Remo, Lloyd George was holding a conference with Briand and, with the concurrence of the French Premier, he sent for Mr. Herbert Samuel and asked him to accept the post of Administrator of Palestine.

Lord Samuel has himself told me that, when the proposal was made to him, he at once asked if Deedes could be



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associated with him in the work, and that he went straight back to his hotel and wrote to Deedes on the same day.

"Dear General Deedes," runs the letter, "The Government have decided that the military administration of Palestine should be replaced by a civilian and have asked me to accept the post of Administrator. . . .

"I have accepted this difficult duty with the hope that I might have your assistance and co-operation. I understand from Dr. Weizmann that you have been proposing to leave Egypt for home on May 10th but that you might stay in the East if you were able to do useful work in Palestine.

"I shall be very glad if you will accept one of the principal posts in the Administration — I hope that of Civil Secretary, which will correspond with that of Chief of Staff in the Military Administration. . . . You know my general policy in relation to Zionism and to the Arabs and the Christians of Palestine. I believe it coincides with your own views. I feel confident that we could work fruitfully together. . . ."

So once again the call came in a manner Deedes felt he could not ignore, and his work in England was once more postponed. He left Egypt in May and saw Mr. Samuel in London at the end of the month. He then accepted the post, with the proviso that he should serve for two years only, and was seconded for service under the Foreign Office, his appointment to date from July 1st. Since, however, he had been so long away from England and had urgent private affairs with which to deal, it was agreed that he should not take up his duties until the end of August or early September. Colonel Storrs would act on his behalf in the meanwhile.

Since Deedes was now in England, living with his steadfast and constant correspondent, his mother, there are no letters in which one can trace the stages by which he reached his reluctant decision, but I feel sure that his belief in the aspirations of Zionism and his knowledge of the

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difficulties which awaited the Palestine Administration were determining factors. A letter from Lord Allenby, dated from Cairo in June, perhaps sums up the general view of the new Administration and gives an indication of why Deedes accepted a place in it.

"I am delighted", wrote his old Chief, "to know that you are coming to Palestine; though, I fear, the acceptance of that post rather upsets your previously formed plans.

"There is a strong anti-Zionist feeling in Palestine and Syria — accentuated by the appointment of a Zionist as the first Civil Administrator — but, though the situation will be difficult, I feel confident that Sir H. Samuel<sup>1</sup> will make a success of his administration.

"I shall be very glad if you will write to me from time to time, as you did from Constantinople. I spoke to the Sultan about you and gave him your message. He said that he was happy to think that you would be in Palestine and that he thought you could be as useful to Egypt there, perhaps, as here. . . ."

Lord Allenby and the Sultan were only two of the many who welcomed the return of Deedes to Palestine, seeing in it, perhaps, the hope of a smoother passage for that storm-tossed ship with its freight of differentiated peoples, different not only in creed and race but covering the whole gamut of civilization, from the primitive pastoral life of the days of Abraham to the highly evolved cultural and economic groups of the great cities of our century.

<sup>1</sup> Between meeting Deedes in Cairo, in November 1920, and taking up his post as High Commissioner, Mr. Samuel had been knighted.

## *Chapter Twenty-One*

FROM September 1920 to April 1923 Deedes laboured in Palestine on the most difficult and most thankless task he had yet undertaken. Some of the difficulties have already been indicated ; the thanklessness lay in the results achieved, which fell short of his hopes, and not in the lack of appreciation of his personal labours. There is abundant evidence of the regard in which he was held by all sections of the community, a regard the more remarkable when the bitterness of the controversies is remembered, and that sympathy shown to one party would almost inevitably provoke mistrust and resistance from the others. Yet so evenly did he hold the balance that I have never yet met anyone who was in Palestine during his years of office who did not greet the mention of his name with affection, often accompanied by the opinion that if only he had remained " things might have been different ".

The Jews owed him much, both then and later, for the aspirations of Zionism touched a deep chord in him and, from that day to this, his sympathy and help have been unwearyingly at their service. After leaving Palestine, he toured Poland, Czecho-Slovakia and America, expounding the ideals and describing the work of those Jews who aspired towards a nationhood which to them alone, of the peoples of the earth, seemed denied. When the latest, and one of the most terrible, persecutions of Jews began in Germany, he did what he could to succour individuals, to forward all projects for the emigration of these imprisoned

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souls and their settlement in other lands where their children, if not they, might found an honourable life under skies undarkened by fear. Many children, in the years 1936 to 1939, owed to him their escape from the bitter humiliations of a Jewish child's life in Germany, and the opportunity to become self-respecting and useful citizens of other countries. The great Zionist endeavour, to train young people to build with their own hands their Home in Palestine, either as agriculturists or as craftsmen, was near to his heart, and so late as the autumn of 1938 he toured South Africa, with Dr. Norman Bentwich, to raise money for the settlement of boys and girls from Germany.

During the years in Palestine he never concealed his belief in the spiritual import of Zionism, nor his hopes for its achievement, yet among many of the Arabs he was almost as much beloved as by the Jews. There is an article in the Arab paper, *Meraat al-Sherk*, of July 28th, 1921, which bears very striking testimony to the feeling he evoked.

"It is very rarely", runs the English version of the article, "that all the people in any country can or do agree upon the support of a single measure or a single individual of their Government. . . . But we can safely state that in Palestine all the people of the country, whether Moslems, Christians or Jews, are perfectly satisfied with the work and person of their Civil Secretary, Sir Wyndham Deedes. . . . The people of Palestine, one and all, love the personality of their Secretary and greatly admire his hard-working habits and devotion to his work, as well as the sincerity which he bears for the welfare of the different elements of the people. Every element in the country as far as we can observe seems to think that he is their friend. But perhaps this is the secret of the matter. For in truth he is on the side of every element, sincerely loves and works for all. . . ."

It is this ability sincerely to love and work for all which

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is the root cause of the influence which Deedes has come to exercise on men and women in his mature years. Since to him all men are spiritually equal in the sight of God and politically and socially equal in the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness", the well-being of the Jews could not exclude that of the Arabs, nor of the Arabs the Jews. If the Jews had the right to work out their destiny on that small spot of ground in Palestine which was to be the fountain-head of their culture, the nexus of their nationhood, the Arabs had the right to aspire to a better economic life, a liberal education and the opportunity to evolve to their own pattern of excellence through self-government. There is no final pattern of excellence, nor are excellences mutually exclusive.

But the path towards the achievement of this goal was stony and uphill.

Allenby had already warned Deedes that there was a strong anti-Zionist feeling in Palestine and this, as has been noted, was not confined to the Arabs but was prevalent also among the British officials. Not only Sir Herbert Samuel but Deedes, with his belief in the Jewish National Home and his close and friendly ties with leading Zionists, started with a heavy handicap to overcome. With some he never quite overcame it. When experience proved to them that he was just, discreet and magnanimous in dealing with all sections alike, they dismissed his ideal of ultimate collaboration between Jew and Arab as impracticable and himself as a visionary. It is always easy for the man who only takes account of the difficulties under his nose to dismiss him of wider horizons as a visionary, because in the short view the former is always right. But the great achievements lie only to the credit of those who can see visions and dream dreams.

This impalpable resistance, the damning resistance of a shrug, is far more deadly than open opposition. From the

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evidence of certain writers on Palestine,<sup>1</sup> and of chance remarks I have heard from time to time, I think that it haunted Deedes to the end. To a man whose passive exterior hides perceptions as delicate as those of a woman, and an all but morbid sensibility, such an atmosphere must at times have been nearly intolerable. Indeed, a close friend of his has told me that at the end of three years Deedes was worn out by "the ding-dong fight" with certain members of the Administration who "did not believe in the policy they were administering". But Deedes has a surprising toughness of body and spirit, and my own feeling is that his endurance and his resolution could never be broken down while he felt that there was work which he should do.

There was another respect, rather comic than tragic in its implications, in which Deedes met with a good deal of opposition at the outset. Having been appointed to an Administration of which the avowed object was to substitute civil for military government, he presumed that all the Generals, Colonels, Majors and so forth would at once doff their uniforms, discard their military titles and sink into the sub-fusc of civil servants! He himself set the example by arriving in Palestine as plain "Mr. Deedes", an example, it is needless to say, which was not followed. This naïveté, which springs perhaps from what a friend calls his "complete selflessness", not only misunderstood the reactions of the average Englishman but also failed to take into account the importance of prestige among Eastern peoples, to whom dress and accoutrements stand for much; a District Officer in uniform with a row of ribbons on his breast was more likely to command respect than Mr. Smith in a flannel suit. So circumstances proved too much for Deedes in this, and

<sup>1</sup> Notably in *A Palestine Note-Book*, by C. R. Ashbee. In it Deedes is treated handsomely enough and his "nervous and burning energy, his fine modesty and reserve" commented upon, but his beliefs are dismissed with the remark that "the English mind is always a bit muddly, woolly, consistent in its inconsistency. . . ." See pp. 197, 221, 222.

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in a very short time he figured as "General Deedes" in the newspapers and in all documents addressed to him, while in photographs taken on formal occasions, when he was with the Emir Abdullah or visiting local sheiks, he is wearing uniform.

It would be a mistake, however, to presume that Deedes met with nothing but difficulties from his English contemporaries. Among the mass of his papers there are too many letters which bear witness to the loyalty and affection he inspired in those with whom he worked to admit of such a hypothesis. He is a sympathetic and readily accessible chief, and though he can be critical when occasion demands and speak his mind in no unmeasured terms, there is an objectivity in his criticism which robs it of much of its sting. Of personal animus there is never a trace, while the petty scandals and small internecine wars that seem inseparable from any association of men wither in his presence. When he cannot commend a man he holds his tongue about him, save when the necessity arises of pronouncing on his fitness or unfitness for a piece of work. He is magnanimous in his personal relations; no man's success could ever cause him a twinge of jealousy, and no man's disappointment leave him untouched. So that to many with whom he worked in Palestine, as later in England, he became more than a colleague or a chief; he was a personal friend, the recipient of their confidence, the kindly sage to whom they could have recourse in their difficulties and worries and come away comforted.

The guiding principle of the value of human contacts which has always animated him marked also his work in Palestine. He felt that the Government at Jerusalem should not remain isolated in its stronghold but that officials holding positions of responsibility should leave their offices and go out into the countryside from time to time. Only so could the departments of Agriculture, Education or Town



Sir Herbert Samuel, Emir Abdullah, W. D., and a Sheik,  
1922





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Planning, for instance, really know what their work looked like from the point of view of the governed, assess the difficulties, understand why certain measures which showed well on paper should prove abortive, or why measures designed to be beneficial should be resisted. His profound belief in decentralization and in the value of local government, when encouraged and properly developed, makes him anxious always to enter into fullest consultation with local authorities, to increase their functions and their sense of responsibility. In this way, he thinks, government becomes a flexible instrument and, ultimately, a true pattern of the ideal of self-government, for men may best learn to find the expression of their political instincts in serving the community which is their personal and immediate environment. Because he believes in democracy in its truest sense, he is always prepared to listen with the most serious attention to the grievances, difficulties or projects of the smallest and most backward local authority, whether it is a committee of small tradesmen in a hard-bitten northern English town, or a group of village elders under the authority of a tribal sheik. As part of the machinery of self-government, also, he regards the voluntary associations in which men group themselves to further their common interests and ideals, considering that they are valuable media through which men may reach the consciousness of their personality and the free development which is the way of human progress.

He set an example to officials of the administration who served under him by numerous journeys up and down the land, and an article in the *Palestine Weekly*, of July 29th, 1921, is evidence of the feeling he evoked among the Palestinians :

“ The recent tour of the Civil Secretary, of the different parts of the land ; his prolonged stay in Arab villages and in Jewish colonies, will be of great value to the administration and we heartily congratulate Sir Wyndham Deedes for having initiated this excellent method of ‘ learning things ’

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by [*sic*] himself. . . . What better way is there to avoid mistakes and escape misjudgments than to see with his own eyes every bit of our land and to hear with his own ears both complaints and suggestions ?

"All higher officials ought to follow the example given by our 'Premier' and come nearer to the soul of the peoples and inhabitants of this land so pregnant with possibilities."

A year later, in September 1922, the same paper, in printing a detailed account of Deedes' latest tours throughout the country, says again : "We note with pleasure that Sir Wyndham Deedes goes straight to the hearts of the people, and even if he is not in a position to give complete satisfaction to some complaints or demands of the people with whom he comes in contact, the reply is rendered in such a manner as to leave no doubt in the minds of the people of his sincerity and real desire to help them."

Although most of these tours were nominally visits of "inspection", Deedes was never content merely to meet officials, officially. With that art of being in some measure at home with all men which he had shown years before in Turkey, he would drink coffee with the village elders, or sit by a village fountain to pass the time of day with the inhabitants and eat their figs and grapes, leaving behind him, when he went, a feeling of good-will which might in time, it seemed, have created an anti-toxin against the poison of enmity between Arab and Jew.

For if the Arabs first respected and then held him in affection, the Jews looked upon him as in a special sense their saviour. There is a curious letter addressed to the High Commissioner from a teacher at the Jewish school of Kephartabor in 1921, a few weeks after the ugly riots of May 1st had brought home to the Jews with special force the depth of Arab hostility. In it the writer refers to a visit paid to the school the previous year by Sir Herbert Samuel and Deedes, and his belief that the names of the years

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according to the Jewish era were prophetic of the special circumstances of the Jewish people, during the war and after. The name of the current year (1921) seems to him to prophesy that Sir Herbert should restore and guide the Jewish people, under the protection of Great Britain. And of Deedes he writes :

“ During his visit to our colony I had expressed to him my hopes, which were based on the conclusion of our Kabalistic Sages, that God manages to bring about the redemption of a nation or country through a person whose name is similar to that of its destroyer. The name of Titus will make Jews shiver at the recollection of all the misery and destruction which he had brought down to our people ; and now that our country is about to be restored, we see before us the name of ‘ Deedes ’ which will bring salvation and hope to a nation which has suffered bi-millenary oppression.<sup>1</sup>

“ Upon hearing this expressed, Mr. Deedes has been pleased to make this historic statement :

“ ‘ You may be assured that as much as that name had caused you unhappiness, in that measure will I strive to do you good. ’ ”

It would be a misunderstanding of Deedes to think that this mystical utterance did not strike an answering chord in him. His conviction that the temporal processes of history are manifestations of a Divine plan, the whole beyond our conception, but offering man redemption from his own nature through many ages and in many ways, often the way of darkness and suffering, admits of no strangeness in the idea that certain events may have touched man with a sign of recognition a thousand years before their fruition.

Another Jewish letter must have moved him too, though in another way. It is from the pupils of the Samson school at Gaza, very moving in the naïveté of

<sup>1</sup> The allusion must be to the Hebrew form of the names Titus and Deedes.

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expression with which it sets forth the aspirations of these Jewish boys, their hope of a new life in the land of their forefathers, free of the old restrictions and of the old evil habits of Jewish life which had grown up under the shadow of those restrictions in the house of exile.

"Sir," runs the letter, which is dated February 1921, "We, the pupils of the 'Samson School', are very happy to see you in our midst. We are but a handful of boys, but the visit of a prominent guest like you gives us the assurance that many more Jewish boys will join us to learn together in this school of ours so as to become useful to our beloved country.

"We now beg of you to accept our present. Indeed it is a humble one but it gives expression to our aspirations which consist in our love of culture and our will to learn in order that we might grow to be 'Samsons' in the field of Gaza. We do not intend to become warriors but we hope to be brave workers. We will endeavour to change the waste lands of our country into a veritable Paradise, the plough shall be the weapon with which we will do wonders like Samson.

"Pray accept, together with our present, our sincere thanks for the keen interest you have taken in our School, and we thank you, brave General, for your visit. We venture to express the hope of seeing you again within the walls of our School, and now we beg to salute you with the blessings of :

Blessed be you in your coming,  
and blessed be you in your going."

It was not alone by his journeyings from Gaza to the land of the Druses that Deedes strove so valiantly to fuse into harmony the diverse and discordant elements in Palestine. He tried also to break down the impalpable barriers by inviting together, under his own roof, Arab

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sheiks and Zionist workers, British officials and dignitaries of the different Christian churches ; members of missions and the Y.M.C.A. and visiting grandees. It was a bold experiment and it was only made possible by the remarkable personality of his mother. Mrs. Deedes had joined her son in Palestine, and from then until the outbreak of war in 1939 they lived together, save for the intervals when he journeyed to Poland or America or S. Africa, on behalf of Zionism, or during the shorter intervals of his tours in the industrial centres or the depressed areas of our own country. She made home for him, and to her he returned, contented or weary and discouraged until, in December 1940, Atropos severed the frail thread of her life and left him alone. It will be evident from the constancy and volume of his correspondence with her, even though I have omitted the more intimate portions of his letters, how preponderating a part she played in his life. She was his closest, perhaps his only confidante ; in his youth he deferred to her opinion and sought her advice on all major issues, and though in later life his spiritual development took him, perhaps, beyond her ken, the tie between them was never broken. One may leave it to the psychologists to dispute whether such a relation between a mother and a son, so constant and so profound, is or is not what should be ; to those who knew them in the later years it had a sacred beauty. For as to her came age, to him maturity, it is evident from the letters that their rôles were reversed ; if in his youth she had dominated his life, in age she leant on him and he supported and sustained her with untiring tenderness and patience. And always, I think, even in boyhood, his spirit was free. She might dictate his career, direct his life, and he would subordinate to her wishes all his inclinations, but never is there evidence that he was deflected from his purpose on a moral issue.

For her at the last he was the great and blessed compen-

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sation for the disappointments, disillusion and frustrations from which no long life is free ; in the days when I knew her, she lived to serve him, and if sometimes the service was in her fashion, not his, that too is human.

Mrs. Deedes' hospitality in Palestine has become legendary. There, in the refectory of Government House, high on its hill looking towards the Mountains of Moab, men and women of every race, class and creed were welcome guests. During the grave illness of Sir Herbert Samuel and his absence on leave, Mrs. Deedes of necessity assumed the task of entertaining official visitors for her son, then acting High Commissioner, and nothing could daunt her, even a suite of thirty with a visiting Emir who spoke nothing but Arabic, nor the unheralded appearance in her rooms, when she was entertaining a group of Moslem ladies, of a man and a dog ! But her parties were not limited to the grandees. Members of the Secretariat, members of the Football Club, which she fostered and encouraged, the staffs of schools, of District Nursing Associations and hospitals, of the Y.M.C.A., the numerous servants of Government House, all were welcomed, and she lavished as much care on the entertainment of the humbler folk as on the great ones. Nor were these organized "set pieces" the limit of her hospitality. Everyone sooner or later came to her flat in Government House ; they dropped in without warning, sometimes seeking word with her son, but quite often to see her. Always they were warmly greeted, well fed, however sudden the incursion, petted a little, perhaps a little flattered too, and dispatched at the end of the visit with the greatest flattery of all : the feeling that they had given pleasure to their hostess.

Mrs. Deedes had a genius for hospitality, but those who said that in other days she would have led a famous salon mistook the nature of her gift. She was not an intellectual woman, though she had great shrewdness in judging people,

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dynamic energy and no mean organizing ability, as most women will attest who realize that at any moment she might be called on to give lunch or dinner to six or a dozen unexpected guests. And whereas a salon is necessarily eclectic, her triumph lay in moulding the heterogeneous elements around her to an atmosphere of simple friendliness, with something of the air of a family Christmas party. She often entertained her guests with games, as well as with music and dancing, and she once achieved the astonishing feat of introducing the Emir Abdullah of Transjordan to a game of "tiddly-flaps", which consisted in beating inflated bladders over a clothes-line, a simplified form of battledore. It is on record that the Emir was seen, in company with his Prime Minister, leaping to and fro, his abayah ballooning in the wind, while his staff and a mixed company of other guests looked benignly on.<sup>1</sup>

How were these miracles achieved? I think the secret lay in two psychological factors: that to Deedes himself there is not, and cannot be, a natural gulf between man and man; that Mrs. Deedes really enjoyed her own hospitality because she loved human beings and liked to see them happy. I never knew her in Palestine, but I have seen her in their seventeenth-century house in Bethnal Green—its loveliness so emphatic among the huddle of mean streets—welcoming alike princesses and school teachers, soldiers (from the great Allenby himself), communists and bishops, philosophers and miners, the duchess and the district nurse. To each one she gave something of herself which seemed to single that individual from the throng; a special squeeze of the hand, a special enquiry as to work or health, even, it might be, a special and favourite brand of bun!

This gift of hers was a priceless asset during the three years of her sojourn in Palestine. For stormy years they

<sup>1</sup> C. R. Ashbee, *A Palestine Note-Book*, p. 214.



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were ; racial and political hatreds fermented and bubbled below the surface, and the Government lived always under the shadow of an apprehension that some minor quarrel would be the spark to fire the trail of violence.

So it was in the May Day riots at Jaffa, in 1921.

The festivals of Passover and the Latin Easter, followed a few days later by the Greek Easter, were safely over, and the authorities began to breathe more freely, since experience showed that the barometer always stood at "Stormy" during the great religious festivals. But on Sunday, May 1st, a clash occurred between two groups of Jews in Telaviv, those representing the Orthodox Labour Party and those representing the Communists. Both were holding May Day demonstrations and they came to blows in the streets.

The unhappy spectacle of two groups of Jews knocking each other about inflamed the Arab temper and gave an irresistible impulse to savage both alike. But the rioting did not stop there ; the Arabs stormed into Immigration House, filled with newly-arrived Jewish immigrants awaiting dispersal to their various centres, and massacred numbers of these innocent persons, men and women alike. This grave news was telephoned to Deedes, just as he and his mother were awaiting Sir Herbert and Lady Samuel to a luncheon party in their flat. Within a quarter of an hour Deedes had left for Jaffa, accompanied by Dr. Norman Bentwich, the Legal Secretary. He did not return till 6 P.M. on the following day, having had no sleep in the meantime and no food for thirteen hours. The task had not been an easy one. The Jews in Palestine have by no means shown themselves the meek, unwarlike people they are reputed to be, and they were inflamed by the massacre at Immigration House, while the Arabs had tasted blood and were *berserk*.

Two scenes from these crowded and dangerous hours Deedes remembers. One is of standing on a lorry in the

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Square of Jaffa, haranguing a packed crowd of perhaps a thousand angry Arabs and exhorting them to disperse peaceably. He succeeded by the force of his personality, the fire of his eloquence and physical courage of no mean order, since he was unarmed and all but alone. By Sunday night the streets were safer, the city quieter. But the fury was not yet expended and rioting broke out again on the following days. The Moslem festival of Nebi Rubin fell within this week, and for it had assembled from all over Palestine a vast concourse of Arabs in a state of religious fanaticism which was fruitful soil for the seed of agitators and malcontents. At length their fury came to a head and they set out to invade the Jewish settlement at Rehoboth, on the outskirts of Jaffa. Deedes saw them marching, a mob of ten thousand, against which the small police force was helpless, and he unable to make himself heard with the voice of persuasion, as previously. Troops had been sent to Jaffa, but these he was loath to use. Instead, he ordered an R.A.F. plane from the near-by airfield to fly low over the heads of the crowd, and he says that the plane came straight along the road towards the vanguard, zoomed up, circled and repeated the manoeuvre. The crowd wavered, then broke and fled. It was stopped at the very edge of the Jewish settlement.

His action at Jaffa undoubtedly prevented a really ugly massacre which might have set light to Palestine from end to end, and the nervous apprehension felt by the British officials in Jerusalem, which is described by Mrs. Deedes in letters to her family, was amply justified. They were in and out of her rooms at all hours, she says, seeking news of her son or word with him, and they confessed that they found comfort in his quiet demeanour and the manner in which he took up the threads of ordinary administration as each crisis was surmounted. When he returned on Monday, May 2nd, after quelling the first riot, he discharged the duty of

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attending an official dinner, in spite of thirty-six hours without sleep !

It was in recognition of the part he had played that he was knighted, and in notifying him of the honour Mr. Winston Churchill, then Secretary for the Colonies, wrote him a personal letter of congratulation on his distinguished services in Palestine. A very ugly corner had been turned, and during the remainder of Deedes' sojourn in Palestine there was only one other serious outbreak of rioting, in Jerusalem, in November 1921, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, kept as holiday by the Jews. Even so, it was less serious than the Jaffa riots, and it was not until 1928 that murder and arson again disfigured the Holy Land.

Meanwhile the Palestine Government strove to develop the resources of the country and to increase the prosperity of all its peoples. The extent of the achievement has not received due recognition in all quarters. In the heat of the political controversy about the respective claims of Jews and Arabs, which at one time seemed to divide public opinion in England as much as in Palestine, the solid achievements from which the whole country benefited have often been overlooked.<sup>1</sup> The immense increase in fertility of a once barren land, due largely to Jewish agricultural settlement ; the harnessing of the waters of the Jordan to provide vast reserves of electric power ; the development of a road and railway system in a country in which, during Allenby's campaign, roads were few and uniformly bad ; the general rise in prosperity for all sections of the community, and the increase in exports which enabled Palestine to weather the economic crisis of the years from 1929 : these stand to the credit of an administration sadly hampered

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, D.S.O., M.P., for instance, says unkindly, "I found the worst British Administration in the whole Empire, and the best Jews in the whole world" (*Memoirs of a Fighting Life*, p. 194).

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by the indecisive policy of the British Government. Sir Herbert Samuel returned to England in 1925, Deedes in 1923, and to their successors credit also is due, but it was in those first stormy and difficult years that the foundations were laid and very many of the projects initiated.

An extract from one of Deedes' very rare long letters from Palestine gives in miniature some evidence of the varied and important activities of the Government. It shows also the pattern of his days, a pattern repeated throughout these many years in England, in which each "unforgiving minute" is indeed filled with sixty seconds' worth of duty done, and in which no duty, if it is a duty, is counted too small to claim a portion of his time and his attention.

" . . . At 8 A.M.", he writes, " I started and polished off the first equipment of papers and the F.O. bag, which had come in. At 9 A.M. to 10 A.M., three appointments. 10 A.M., Food Control Committee, of which I am Chairman, to discuss our Food Control policy during the winter months and (2) whether we should allow cereals from Transjordan to pass through Palestine in transit and allow free export. That finished at 10.45.<sup>1</sup> Then I had to see the Director of Industry and Commerce, and the Legal Secretary. 11.15, Our weekly meeting; High Commissioner and three secretaries. 12 noon, Appointment with the Director of Agriculture. 12.30, With Colonel Margolin, Commander 39th Fusiliers (the Judean Battalion). 12.45, With another officer. 1 P.M., I always do all the in-and-out telegrams with my two secretaries. 1.15, Another appointment. 2 P.M., Another appointment.

" 2.30, Ruthenberg, the Engineer of the big Water Scheme for Palestine. 3 P.M., A Colonel i/c Intelligence, from Constantinople, whom the military authorities thought I would like to see. 3.30, The Military Liaison officer with the French in Beyrut. 4 P.M., A poor protégé, who had

Surely a record speed for any Committee, even with Deedes as Chairman !

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followed me to Palestine from Cairo. 4.15-4.30, Tried to do some papers with Richmond (Political Assistant Secretary) and Keith Roach (Administrative ditto). 5 P.M., to Y.M.C.A., to which I had just been elected a director. At the meeting was elected President for the year (more work!). Thence to the Mayor of Jerusalem, 6.15. 7 P.M., Home. Bath. Dinner, and papers till 10.15 bed.

"Most days are like this. You may add to all this a very frequent telephone. But I am in the very best of health in spite of it."

By Allah, as the Turkish officers used to say of him, like iron, no rest! How is it that Deedes can work at such pressure and can continue so to work for many years? The demand made upon nervous energy by the constant change from one set of ideas to another, from one personality to another, is alone formidable, without taking into account the long hours without rest, exercise or, apparently, even food. The secret of such sustained effort lies in two qualities which he possesses in very high degree: the capacity for concentration and the capacity for detachment. His concentration is ferocious. He will bend all his intellectual energy on the problem before him at 10.15, and that having been dealt with will put it away in some drawer in his mind, shut it with a click, and take up the next thing. He seems never to carry over stray thoughts and impressions from one section of his work to another, as most of us do, but having given to Ruthenberg, say, his closest attention from 2.30 to 3 P.M., will start at 3 P.M. with the Colonel of Intelligence as if that were the sole preoccupation of his day.

His detachment is rather a spiritual than an intellectual quality. He can at will withdraw himself from the world in which he plays so efficient a part, slough off its anxieties, dangers, hopes or aspirations, and enter the realm of contemplation in which the phenomena of daily existence are only "maya", illusion. From that far journey he will

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return refreshed, with perhaps a little of the chill of those high altitudes still manifest about him, to take up with patience and courtesy the tasks with which the world has burdened him.

In 1922 the burden was very grievous. This was the year which he had intended should see the end of his exile from England, but in the early months of it Sir Herbert Samuel's health failed and in April he went home on prolonged sick leave. Deedes was appointed acting High Commissioner in his stead and he knew, none better, that not at this moment could he turn his back on Palestine. Arab opposition to the Jewish National Home, far from diminishing, was gathering way and a powerful Arab delegation had come to England, at the end of 1921, to demand that Jewish immigration into Palestine should be stopped. To this, in honour bound, the British Government could not agree. But in June 1922 it published a formal definition of the Jewish National Home in which it was characterized as being the National Home *in* Palestine and not, as formerly, *of* Palestine. In this small preposition, it appeared to many Zionists, lay the death of their hopes; it fixed them for ever as a minority, a colony in a land not their own, and deprived them of that for which they had so long striven, the inalienable right to the full status of nationhood.

Perhaps they exaggerated the significance of a formal phrase, for the next step of the British Government found the Arabs as irreconcilable as ever, in spite of the Jewish view that the dice were loaded in their favour.

In April 1922, at the second Conference of San Remo, the British Mandate for Palestine was formally confirmed, and the British Government therefore proposed to set up a Legislative Assembly of twenty-two members, of whom twelve were to be chosen by electoral colleges and the remaining ten appointed by the Palestine Government. Of

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the twelve elected representatives, eight were to be chosen by the Arabs and four by the Jews, in recognition of the preponderance of Arab nationals in the country. Though this placed the Jews in a minority, the British Government may well have hoped that a just balance between the conflicting interests would be struck by the ten members chosen by the High Commissioner, as has often been proved to be the case in other colonial dependencies.<sup>1</sup> The Jews accepted this very modified form of self-government *faute de mieux*, but the Arabs rejected it unconditionally. They boycotted the primary elections, those which returned candidates to the colleges, and only one quarter of the Moslem Arabs went to the polls. In these circumstances, it was useless to pretend that the result of the elections would be democratically representative; accordingly the secondary elections were cancelled, and the Legislative Assembly died still-born.

Deedes, as may be expected, expended himself in attempts to persuade the Arabs to exercise their vote and to give this form of government at least a trial. He travelled up and down the country addressing meetings, using all his gifts of eloquence, persuasiveness and personal ascendancy, but in vain. The Arabs were not to be won over.

Out of this strenuous and unfruitful period one amusing episode emerges which is worth quoting, since it shows that touch of humour which never deserts Deedes and lightens with an agreeable gleam the deeper aspects of his character. Writing to a relative at home, in September 1922, he says :

“ You may like a little rapidly written and compressed news.

“ Friday last, I went down after luncheon to a large Arab fair, Nebi Rubin (our friend Reuben — son of Jacob) at Ramleh, near Jaffa. . . . It is a large tent town where the

<sup>1</sup> Notably in Cyprus, where the Turks and the Greeks could be relied on always to vote on opposite sides, but the Government was in a position to strengthen the weaker party when it seemed just to do so.

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fellahin go for a month and live in booths. A fluctuating population of up to fifty thousand. At the entrance to the Camp I was met by a Squadron of Palestine Gendarmerie, lances, and pennants flying, and so escorted to the reception tent through crowds of people. Then speeches, and my speech, and visits to notables in their tents. A big evening feast. Then round the Fair, which is just like what I imagine an English one would be like, merry-go-rounds, swings, jugglers, etc. etc. I had my fortune told in one place amid a big crowd of Arabs. (Do not forget that all this in despite of the fact that we have rather an acute political situation ; an empty-handed returned Delegation and a 'non-cooperation in the elections for the new Legislative Council movement' going on.)

"The man who told my fortune in the sand said I was deliberating between a choice of two decisions of great import and had not made up my mind ! Now, whether he wanted to refer to Pro-Zionism or Pro-Arabism I know not but I, addressing the crowd, said, 'You have indeed a very clever fortune-teller. I *am* deliberating between two opinions of great moment, namely, whether I shall give him for his trouble five piastres or ten, and I have decided to give him ten !' This brought the house down !"

The year 1922 closed in disappointment and anxiety. In April 1923 Deedes put into effect his long-hoped-for and long-deferred plan and returned to England. He had sent in his formal resignation in 1922, at the end of the two years' service which, from the beginning, he had set as the term of his tenure of office, and though, in view of the illness of the High Commissioner and the concern of the British Government at the prospect of a new Civil Secretary during the absence of Sir Herbert Samuel, he had consented to remain, it was for one year only. From this decision nothing could deflect him : not the frank regret of Sir Herbert ; not the representations of his friends ; not the

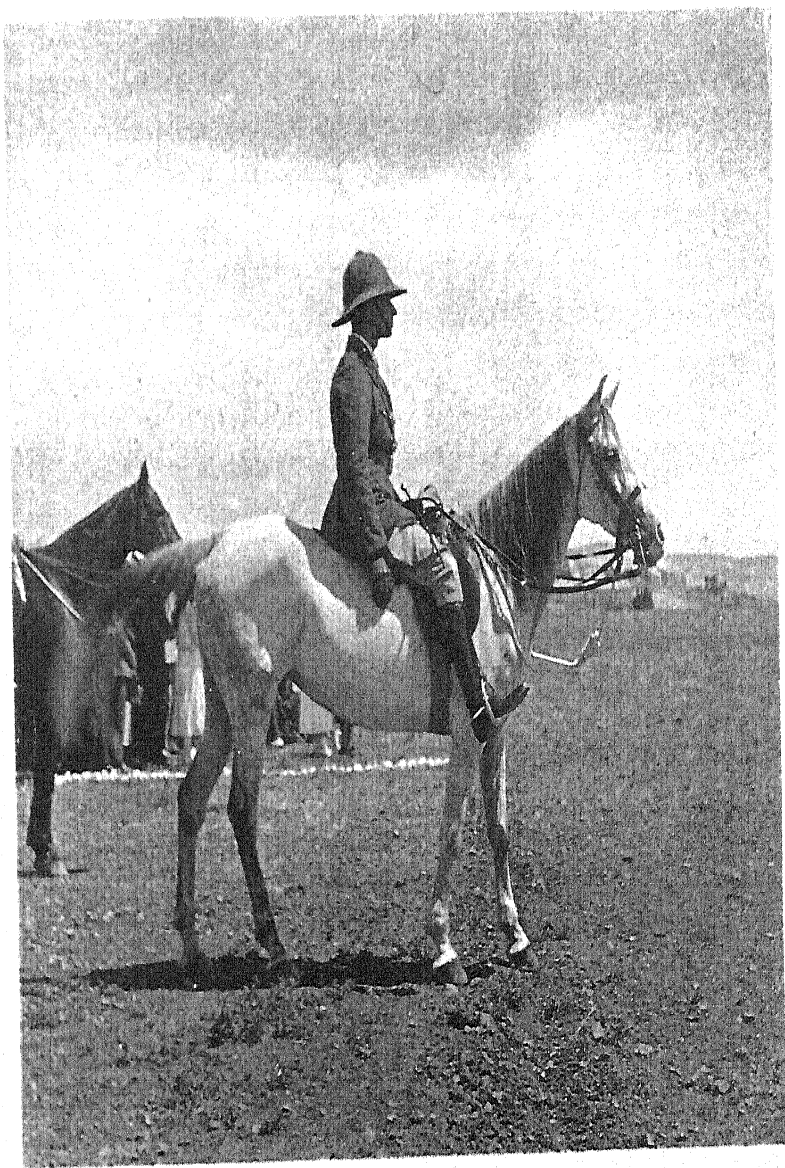


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concern, amounting to dismay, among the peoples of Palestine, Moslem, Jew and Christian alike. The tokens of regard, and indeed of personal affection, which were lavished upon him in such generous measure, touched him, but left him adamant of will. Refusing all official ceremonies of farewell, he gave himself in the last weeks to bidding a personal goodbye to all the diverse groups who had looked to him for inspiration and sustainment, to scores of individuals, among them the most humble in position, who had served him or whom he had come to know through his manifold activities. Their love and grief were at times so manifest that Mrs. Deedes found them hard to bear, but they were powerless against the strength of that inner urge which possessed him.

So, as he had long intended, he resigned his commission, he put aside the pomp and circumstance inseparable from his position and entered upon that new life among and on behalf of the poor and the unhappy of his own country to which his eyes had been so long turned. For many years his days, with few exceptions, were passed between Bethnal Green and Bedford Square, and he, to whom had belonged all the pleasant privileges of high office — the car, the guard of honour, the care for his comfort and convenience — was content to join the scramble in Tube or bus of those carried to and from their daily work, and to snatch his meals, if need be, in the dismal buffet of some railway station.

That an action which carried him from Government House to the narrow confines of these London streets could only spring from a noble conviction must be clear, but still one asks oneself: Why did he do it at this moment? Why did he, with so rare a combination of qualities as to give him a unique personal ascendancy over all the mutually distrustful elements in Palestine, turn his back upon a country whose destiny required so much patience, so much sympathy and so much wisdom? I have put the same question to his



W. D. taking the Salute on the King's Birthday, Palestine,  
1922



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friends. Several concur in saying that he was bitterly disappointed by the result of the electoral campaign, and one has added that he was in truth worn out by a never-ending struggle with one of his principal English colleagues, who was avowedly hostile to Zionism and never meant that the Arabs and the Jews should reach an understanding. But those who know Deedes cannot feel that, however weary he might be and however discouraged, he would desert a post to which he felt in duty assigned. Only when the inner voice, the voice which spoke to Socrates and Joan of Arc, tells him that his usefulness is ended, can he seek release from a task, however distasteful, a burden, however onerous. Such conviction, I believe, came to him in 1923.

Perhaps Mr. Israel Sieff, who, knowing Deedes less intimately than many, has the gift of seeing men imaginatively, gets nearest to the truth. He told me, "They wasted Deedes in Palestine; they threw him away. He was frustrated by those about him who had not his vision, perhaps even, unconsciously, by Lord Samuel himself, because he allowed him to be burdened by a vast mass of administrative detail with which he should never have had to deal. With a trained and able staff to relieve him of this necessary detail he would be a fine administrator, but even so it is not as an administrator that he has his supreme worth, it is as an initiator, a man who sees to more distant horizons than most of us, who can grasp the widest implications and plan on the grandest scale, for years ahead. Above all, it is as an inspirer of other men that he will be remembered."

Here, then, for the present, the story stays, though it is clearly not the end of the story. The years between 1923 and 1939 should one day find a biographer who may be able to assess more clearly than we, still living in the thick of events, the part played by Deedes in inspiring and in initiating the

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great movement toward social reform which, at first a barely perceptible ground swell, is gathering volume under the pressure of world events and may, like a great wave, wash clean away the battered and useless wreckage which has disfigured our national life.

But Deedes is still only in middle life and the later chapters may yet bring surprise to those who think they know all the facets of his character. For he is one of the followers of the Holy Grail, and to those ardent spirits there is no respite while life endures. Not for them a permanent habitation, however seemly, only brief halts by the roadside until they set out again on that journey without end to that glory which is unattainable. For them neither love nor achievement, neither honour nor approbation, can bring content; these fall from them like leaves from the tree which is bared for its strong tussle with the winter gales. So their lives have something of the starkness of winter trees, no gentle joys can nest there. Often, indeed, they bring pain to those who love them and disappointment to those who seek their leadership, because they turn aside from love and leadership to follow some obscurer star.

It may be so with Deedes. To many he is the apostle of a new order where justice — the Divine Justice of Hesiod — orders all the relations of man with man, within the community. It is possible that in the ferment of spiritual forces now at war, when the depths of life are seething in the terrifying manifestations of eternal vitality, Deedes may become a leader of that new order. Or it is possible that, stepping aside from those he has done so much to inspire, he will withdraw into some lonely wilderness of his own, as in the dark centuries men withdrew into the deserts of Africa and there, in the hut each builded with his own hands, contemplated the eternity of God among the ruin of temporal Empires.

But, whichever it may be, there will be no inconsistency.

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The whole of Deedes' life is consistent to an inner pattern, though the surface shows many contradictions. He has enjoyed all the graciousness of a richly privileged class ; he has conformed to the traditions of the two strictest ancient hierarchies of our land, the Squirearchy and the Army ; he has served his country in war and peace ; he has led the van of a battle for a new conception of social justice, but always, when most in the world, he was not of it. The service which he rendered was, consciously or unconsciously, the price he paid to redeem himself for something other, something else. It is hard to put into words what that something is, but to him it comes as a vision, which has lain before his inner eye since he was a boy of fifteen, of one small room in a mean street of the darkest slum of one of our great cities. A strange desire for a man to whom the country of his forebears is still the most beloved spot on earth, and who cannot even pass in a train without straining his eyes to catch a glimpse of the grey battlements of Saltwood Castle, between the sea and the green swell of the downs. But in that contradiction, too, there is no inconsistency. In the arduous dedication of the soul to God, unless all is surrendered, nothing is surrendered, as men knew well in other ages when knights and nobles, who had ridden in the vanguard of armies and sat with honour among their peers, put off their armour, broke their ties of love, surrendered their lands, their titles and their very names and, lost in the anonymity of the monk's cowl, sought their soul's salvation.

For Wyndham Deedes there can be no cloister, but in his vision of the mean street it is the narrow cell he sees, where solitary, unknown and unregarded, he may at last find peace from the self in the boundless contemplation of God.



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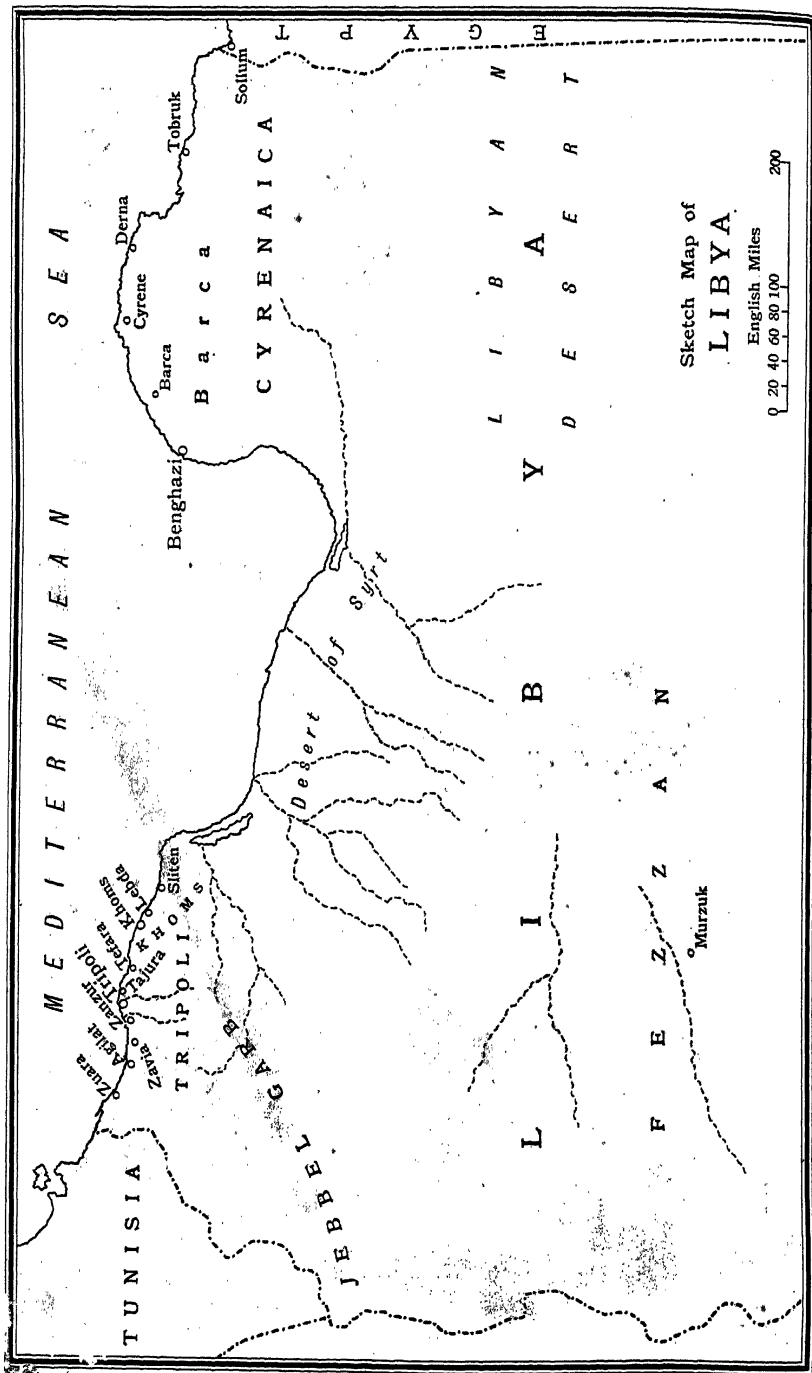
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PRESIDENT'S  
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Sketch Map of  
**LIBYA**

English Miles

0 20 40 60 80 100 200

